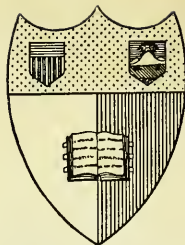


COLERIDGE AND
WORDSWORTH IN
THE WEST COUNTRY

ILLUSTRATED
BY EDMUND H. NEW

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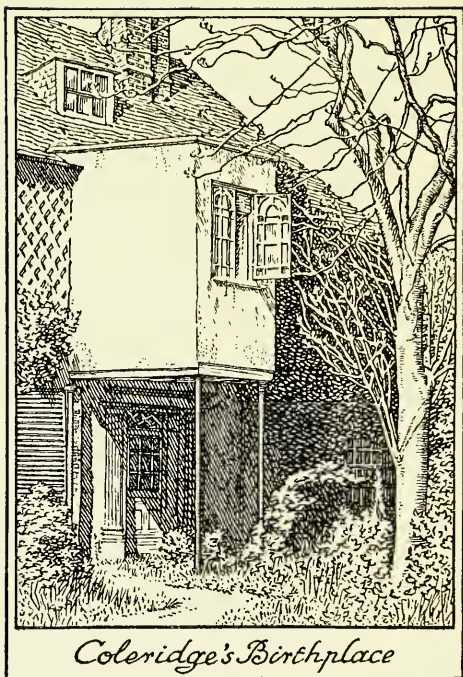
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THE GIFT OF
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1925



COLERIDGE AND WORDSWORTH



Coleridge's Birthplace

*The room at the Vicarage, Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, in
which Coleridge was born, on October 21st, 1772.*

COLERIDGE AND WORDSWORTH

IN

The West Country
Their Friendship, Work, and
Surroundings

BY

PROFESSOR KNIGHT

ILLUSTRATED BY

EDMUND H. NEW

ELKIN MATHEWS
CORK STREET, LONDON

1913

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TO
MY FRIEND
AMY HEYWOOD CANN
THIS BOOK ON
COLERIDGE AND WORDSWORTH
IN THE WEST COUNTRY,
THEIR FRIENDSHIP, WORK, AND SURROUNDINGS,
IS INSCRIBED BY THE AUTHOR, W. K.
JULY, 1913.

PREFACE

THE two friends, and brother-poets—William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge—lived with their households in Dorset and Somerset, during part of the years 1795–1798: Wordsworth at Racedown in Dorset, and afterwards at Alfoxden in Somerset; Coleridge at Nether Stowey in the latter county. There they began their immortal poetic work for the world, both as conscious and unconscious co-operators in one of the greatest and most enduring of literary movements that Britain has known, before they left their native land for a short time.

Towards the close of 1798 they both visited the continent of Europe, going in different

Preface

directions and staying at various places—Wordsworth and his sister at Goslar, and Coleridge at Ratzeburg and Göttingen, but they were only absent for a few months. It is, however, to what they accomplished in the years they spent in the south-west corner of England, and also to the generous aid given to them by one or two sympathetic friends, that this small book is devoted.

In it I have endeavoured to focus the existing material, which has been dealt with more particularly by the late Mr. Dykes Campbell in his *Life of Coleridge*, and the notes to his edition of the *Poems*. I have not referred, except when quite necessary, to my own *Life of Wordsworth* (1889), to the two editions of his *Poems*, viz. the *Poetical Works*, issued in 1882–6 by William Paterson, Edinburgh, and the subsequent Eversley edition of them, published by Messrs. Macmillan in 1896–7. All that I had then to say

Preface

—either as to Wordsworth or Coleridge—was included in these volumes.

In this one I endeavour shortly to record some of the more remarkable features of that movement, which arose from the heart of the Anglo-Saxon race, towards a new understanding, and a more correct appreciation, of what I have ventured to call “the Philosophical Undertones of Modern Poetry”; and which I have tried to explain orally to many audiences, both in England and America.

At present I limit myself mainly to the dawning genius of the two men who were the chief exponents of that influence, in the poetic renaissance of England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They had many illustrious predecessors, who sowed some seed in scattered places: but theirs is the everlasting honour of having “begun and continued”—although happily they did not “end”—the most remarkable revival of the ideal

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as opposed to the prosaic actual, in the poetic work of Britain.

I may add that Chapter I, which deals with "the first meeting of Wordsworth and Coleridge," was contributed to *The Academy* of May 20th, 1905 ; and that Dorothy Wordsworth's *Alfoxden Journal* was published in the Eversley edition of her brother's works, in the year 1897.

Perhaps most readers of this book will be chiefly interested in the record of that marvellous friendship, which began at Racedown and developed at Alfoxden, between William and Dorothy Wordsworth ; a friendship of brother and sister which has, *me judice*, no parallel in the recorded literary history of the world. Where else is there the record of a tie so intense, so disinterested, so mutually helpful—unbroken by a single domestic incident or accident—so full of restful solace and inspiring stimulus, with an indebtedness the

Preface

one to the other, that was scarcely a conscious possession, but a permanently abiding treasure ?

Their contemporaries — Charles and Mary Lamb, with Henrietta and Ernest Renan—are the only ones that approach them ; but they follow at a very easily measurable distance.

W. K.



Myrtle Cottage

*The Cottage at Clevedon, in which Coleridge and his wife
began their married life.*

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Drawn from a photograph borrowed by Mr. Elkin Mathews from Mrs. Wilson, the daughter of a late Chaplain Priest of the parish, showing the outside of the room in which S. T. C. was born.

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Coleridge and Wordsworth
in the West Country



*No. 7 Great George Street,
Bristol*

- 1906

Coleridge and Wordsworth in the West Country

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST MEETING OF WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE

IT seems strange that a doubt should still exist as to the exact date, and place of the first meeting of these poets ; whether it occurred at Racedown or at Bristol (for nowhere else could it have happened); and, if it was in the latter, where and when in that city it took place. Much has been surmised, and a good deal written on the subject : but neither point has as yet been determined with accuracy.

In *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* by

Coleridge and Wordsworth

James Gillman (Vol. I, p. 74), the writer says :—

“Some years since the late Charles Mathews, the comedian (or rather, as Coleridge used to observe, ‘the comic poet acting his own poems’), showed me an autograph letter from Mr. Wordsworth to Mathews’ brother, who was at that time educating for the Bar, and with whom he corresponded. In this letter he made the following observation : ‘To-morrow I am going to Bristol to see those two extraordinary young men, Southey and Coleridge.’”

Gillman does not give the date of this letter, and his story contains several inaccuracies ; for he goes on to say, “Mr. Wordsworth was then residing at Alfoxden,” whereas when he first met Coleridge, and for nearly two years afterwards, he was the tenant of Racedown. If the letter of Wordsworth to his friend Mathews was extant and accessible, the difficulty could be

Their First Meeting

cleared up at once ; but all that we can gather from this extract is the fact that he went to Bristol from Racedown, on a particular day, to see both Southey and Coleridge, presumably to see them together, and that these two “extraordinary young men” were already acquainted. Coleridge’s own statements on the subject are ambiguous, and in later years his memory failed him ; so that it is impossible to say whether, in what he then wrote, he refers to a first interview, or to the beginning of intimacy and friendship.

Fortunately we have two more explicit witness-bearers, viz. Mrs. Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge. (1) On November 7, 1845, Mrs. Wordsworth wrote to Sara Coleridge, the daughter of S. T. C., as follows :—

“ With my husband’s tender love to you, he bids me say—in reply to a question you have put to him through Miss Fenwick—that he has not as distinct a remembrance as

Coleridge and Wordsworth

he could wish of the time when he first saw your father, and your uncle Southey ; but the impression upon his mind is that he first saw them both, and your mother and aunt Edith at the same time, in a lodging in Bristol. This must have been about the year 1795. Your father, he says, came afterwards to see us at Racedown, where I was then living with my sister. We have both a distinct remembrance of his arrival. He did not keep to the high road, but leapt over a gate, and bounded down a pathless field by which he cut off an angle. We both retain the liveliest possible image of his appearance at that moment.

“ Most affectionately yours,

“ M. WORDSWORTH.”

(2) Mrs. Henry Nelson Coleridge—the same daughter Sara—in the biographical supplement to the *Biographia Literaria* (1847), Vol. II, pp. 345–6, writes :—

“ The whole spring and summer of this

Their First Meeting

year (1795), he, i.e. her father, devoted to public lectures at Bristol, making in the intervals several excursions in Somersetshire, one memorial of which remains in the *Lines composed while climbing Brockley Coomb* (May, 1795). It was in one of these excursions that Mr. Coleridge and Mr. Wordsworth first met, at the house of Mr. Pinney."

This statement would doubtless be made on the authority of her mother, Mrs. Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Now we know, from Dorothy Wordsworth's letter to Mrs. Marshall, of September 2, 1795, that she and her brother were with the Pinneys at Bristol about the end of August, 1795, previous to their receiving the loan of the farmhouse at Racedown. Coleridge's *Lines written at Clevedon* are dated August 20, 1795. He was married in October, 1795; and, if Wordsworth came in from Racedown to Bristol to see him and Southey (as he tells

Coleridge and Wordsworth

us he did), and if Mrs. Wordsworth was correct in reporting her husband's recollection of meeting the two young Bristol poets, and the two Miss Frickers whom they married, *at the same time in the same house*; and if, in addition, Sara Coleridge is correct in her report that her father and Coleridge first met in Mr. Pinney's house, it is almost proved that the meeting took place, not during a country excursion out of Bristol (as her daughter Sara suggests), but in the city itself, and in the early autumn, viz. August or September, of the year 1795.

I have only recently found out where Mr. Pinney's house in Bristol was, and now is; for it is still standing. It is a large, commodious, eighteenth-century mansion, No. 7 Great George Street, Brandon Hill, Clifton. Wordsworth could not possibly have *invented* a meeting with Coleridge and Southey, and the two Miss Frickers, in the lodgings which the poets then occupied in 25 College Street. And as we know that it

Their First Meeting

took place in the autumn of 1795, before Coleridge's wedding in October, we are almost shut up to the conclusion that the meeting took place in Mr. Pinney's house in Great George Street.

I have obtained the following information, gathered from the title-deeds of the present owner of the property. In the year 1788 John Pinney built 7 Great George Street on part of the land known as Boar's Head Ground and Bullock Park. In 1817 John Pinney gave the house to Charles Pinney. By a marriage settlement, March 6, 1831, Charles Pinney settled the house on his wife; and in 1861 Charles Pinney and his trustees sold it to the present owners. It is a substantial house, solidly built.

There it was, in the house immediately opposite the steps leading up to the southern entrance to St. George's Church on Brandon Hill, that the three men—Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey—first met; and thereafter, Wordsworth paid a return call

Coleridge and Wordsworth

at the lodging of Coleridge and Southey in College Street. Another item of evidence may be gathered from S. T. C.'s poem, *Lines written at Shurton Bars, near Bridgewater*, which was dated "September, 1795, in answer to a letter from Bristol." It is evidently addressed to his *fiancée*, Sarah Fricker; and it contains the first printed reference to Wordsworth which Coleridge made. He mentions the glowworm, moving with "green radiance" through the grass, and in a footnote tells us that the phrase is "borrowed from Mr. Wordsworth, a poet whose versification is occasionally harsh, and his diction too frequently obscure; but whom I deem unrivalled among the writers of the present day in manly sentiment, novel imagery, and vivid colouring." The only poems at that time published by Wordsworth were *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. Little could Coleridge then forecast their joint literary workmanship in the *Lyrical Ballads*. But

Their First Meeting

the above note was probably written in 1795, when the *Lines* were composed, and it was certainly published in April, 1796. The house in College Street, where Coleridge and Southey lived together, was then numbered 48. It is now No. 54, is built of stone, has a single shop-window and door, but no shop on the ground floor. It has two windows on each side of the upper stories, and of the attic. It is in a street of some eighty modest, well-built, eighteenth-century houses; most of them of brick, but some of ashlar free-stone, all three stories high. No. 54 is now marked by a tablet with the inscription, "Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Poet, lived here, 1794."

It may be of use to mention the places in which Coleridge lived during these eventful years, with approximate dates. In the summer of 1794, at the close of a pedestrian tour in Wales, he reached Bristol; and walked thence with Southey into Somerset, to see

Coleridge and Wordsworth

their common friend Burnett at his father's house, and discuss the recently formed scheme of Pantisocracy and emigration to America. On August 18 he met Thomas Poole at Nether Stowey ; and, returning to Southey's mother's house at Bath, met and became engaged to Sarah Fricker, to whose sister, Edith, Southey became engaged. He stayed thereafter at Bristol for several weeks, writing and lecturing ; then went to Cambridge, which he left for London in December. Early in January, 1795, Southey went up to London, and brought him back to 48 College Street, Bristol, where he (Southey) lodged with Burnett ; and there Coleridge remained with Southey, sharing rooms with his two friends, writing and lecturing till summer. Then they separated, Southey returning to Bath, and Coleridge going alone into rooms at 25 College Street, a house which no longer exists. In September he went down to Nether Stowey to visit Poole.

Returning to Bristol, he was married to



*No. 54, College Street
Bristol 1906*

Their First Meeting

Sarah Fricker, in the church of St. Mary Redcliffe, on October 4, 1795, and at once settled in a cottage at Clevedon. This he soon found too far from the Bristol library, and removed to rooms on Redcliffe Hill. In February, 1796, he went to Nether Stowey to visit Thomas Poole ; but returned to Bristol, to a house at Kingsdown. Thence they went to reside in Nether Stowey, on December 31, 1796, where they stayed till 1800. A narrow pathway communicated with Poole's garden. There was no quiet possible, and there were almost always visitors. Poole's library was near, and the "jasmine arbour" close at hand. Yet here Coleridge's finest poetic work was done ; and hither came the Wordsworths, Charles Lamb, Hazlitt, Thelwall, and others.

During the same period of their early genius Wordsworth was at Racedown, arriving with his sister in October, 1795 ; where he began his tragedy of *The Borderers*, and also the *Ruined Cottage*. In

Coleridge and Wordsworth

1796—when S. T. C. published his *Poems*, and Southey his *Joan of Arc*—Wordsworth finished his tragedy, and began to write lyrics. Coleridge went out to see him at Racedown on June 16, 1796, again on the 28th, and on July 2; returning on that day to Stowey with the Wordsworths, who remained there a fortnight, before they settled at Alfoxden.

It should be mentioned that both the Racedown farmhouse and the Nether Stowey cottage are still very much as they were at the close of the eighteenth century: Racedown entirely so, with the exception of a porch; and Stowey with the addition of an ugly projecting wing on the right-hand side of the old cottage. Racedown still belongs to the Pinney family, and their tenant is glad to show the house and grounds to visitors. The Rev. William Greswell—late of Dodington Rectory, Bridgwater—did much for the Stowey cottage, and charged himself with its upkeep; but it is greatly to

Their First Meeting

be desired that the room in which *The Ancient Mariner*, and *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, *Frost at Midnight*, *Fears in Solitude*, and many another lovely lyric were either written or revised, should become the property of the nation, as Dove Cottage at Grasmere is. Or, if local effort can start a public library for the village, some generous donor—who is a lover of the poets, as well as a friend of the people—might surely be found to purchase the cottage and its garden, take down the ugly annexe, and build a room behind to hold the books, the librarian and the caretaker living in the historic ones.

I may add that much light is cast on these days, places, and persons by the *Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, issued by Messrs. Ginn and Co., Boston, U.S.A.

Since the second last paragraph was written, the Stowey Cottage has been bought, and secured for the Nation in Perpetuity.

CHAPTER II

WORDSWORTH AT RACEDOWN IN THE YEAR 1795, AND AFTER

WHERE Wordsworth spent the entire summer of 1795 is not now knowable in detail. Early in that year he was at Penrith, and he probably accompanied his sister thence to Halifax. He afterwards travelled up to London, where part of the autumn was spent. Thereafter, he went down to Bristol, on a visit to Mr. Pinney, a rich merchant there, who had also a residence at Racedown, in Dorset, which became Wordsworth's abode towards the close of the year.

What led him to make Racedown his first *home* in England is told us in one of his sister's letters to her friend, Jane Pollard, who was married on the 5th of August to



Racedown

Wordsworth at Racedown

Mr. John Marshall, of Leeds. Mrs. Marshall's brother had gone to Bristol to visit Mr. Pinney, who had handed over the country house at Racedown to his son; and the son offered it—furnished and rent-free, with garden and orchard-ground attached—to Wordsworth, on the sole condition that its owner should come down occasionally and stay for a few weeks when he desired a change of air or scene. Mr. Montagu—Wordsworth's friend—then wished him to take charge of his boy Basil, offering £50 a year for his board; and Wordsworth expected to have Mr. Pinney's son (aged thirteen) as a second pupil; while Dorothy was asked to superintend and teach a cousin's child, three and a half years of age.

The following is an extract from Dorothy Wordsworth's letter to Miss Pollard :—

“ MILLHOUSE, *September 2, 1795.*

“ . . . I am going to live in Dorsetshire. You know the pleasure I have always attached

Coleridge and Wordsworth

to the idea of home—a blessing I so early lost. I think I told you that Mr. Montagu had a little boy, who, as you will perceive, could not be very well taken care of, either in his father's chambers, or under the uncertain management of various friends of Mr. M., with whom he has frequently stayed. . . . A daughter of Mr. Tom Myers, a cousin of mine, is coming over to England by the first ship, which is expected in about a week, to be educated. She is, I believe, about three or four years old ; and T. Myers' brother, who has charge of her, has suggested that I should take her under my care. With these two children, and the produce of Raisley Calvert's legacy, we shall have an income of at least £70 or £80 per annum. William finds that he can get nine per cent for the money upon the best security. He means to sink half of it upon my life, which will make me always comfortable and independent. . . . Living in the unsettled way in which my

Wordsworth at Racedown

brother has hitherto lived in London is always unfavourable to mental exertion. . . . He has had the offer of ten guineas for a work which has not taken up much time ; and half the profits of a second edition, if it should be called for. It is a little sum, but it is one step. . . . I am determined to work with resolution. . . . It will greatly contribute to my happiness, and place me in such a situation that I shall be doing something. . . . I shall have to join William at Bristol, and proceed thence in a chaise with Basil to Racedown. It is fifty miles.”

In this Racedown house—half-way between Crewkerne in Somerset, and Lyme in Dorset—Wordsworth began what was to continue till his death to be the one supreme aim and object of his life.

The following is a description of the house, as seen in the summer of 1887.

“ We approached the old farmhouse, over meadows bright with yellow iris and purple

Coleridge and Wordsworth

foxglove, through lanes lined on either side with fern, and hung with honeysuckle and wild rose. Large beech trees shade the entrance-gate ; the house, and its clustering farm buildings, stand on the slope of Black-down ; open grass fields surround them. From the terrace-garden on the western side of the house, wide views of hill and valley are obtained. Below, in meadows famous for daffodils, winds Cindreford brook. The hollow is well wooded, the remains of an avenue of Scots firs being a prominent feature. On the opposite side of the valley rises Greggy, with quaint clumps of fir trees on the ridge of the hill. Beyond, a glimpse of Lambert's Castle is to be had, and of another hill locally known as Golden Cap, from the brilliance of the gorse when in bloom, which is said to serve as a beacon to ships. The sea itself is visible from the top of the house, and its reviving breezes may be felt in the garden. The house, built of dull red brick,

Wordsworth at Racedown

covered in front with grey stucco and much weather-stained, is three stories high ; but has no beauty beyond that of situation and association. A porch, recently added, opens into a fairly wide and airy hall, with an old-fashioned staircase. The room on the right hand, looking out to the grass fields in front and to the large beeches at the entrance-gate, is the one which Wordsworth occupied. It is square and low, with two deep recesses, and a highly ornamented plaster ceiling. A small room over the hall is said to have been used by the poet as a study."

In this farmhouse, well stocked with books, William and Dorothy Wordsworth began their life of closely associated labour. They spent their time industriously in reading—"if reading," Wordsworth wrote to his friend William Mathews,¹ "can ever deserve the name of industry"—in writing and in gardening. Wordsworth told Mathews that he had begun to read Ariosto with his

¹ March 21, 1796.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

sister ; and she, writing to Mrs. Marshall, said that her brother “ handled the spade with great dexterity.” The post brought them letters only once a week, and they had no society to distract them. Nevertheless, four years later—after they had experience of Alfoxden and of Germany—Dorothy wrote of Racedown as the place dearest to her recollections upon the whole surface of the island ; it was the first *home* she had ; and she described “ the lovely meadows above the tops of the coombs, and the scenery on Pilsden, Lewisden, and Blackdown Hill, with the view of the sea from Lambert’s Castle.”

It is somewhat strange that the first literary venture which Wordsworth attempted at Racedown was to make experimental essays in both Satire and Tragedy, the two kinds of poetical composition in which, of all others, he was least fitted to excel. To his friend William Mathews, he wrote : “ Not entirely to forget the world, I season my

Wordsworth at Racedown

recollection of some of its objects with a little ill-nature. I attempt to write satires: and in all satires, whatever the authors may say, there will be found a spice of malignity. Neither Juvenal nor Horace were without it; and what shall we say of Boileau and Pope?"

He sent his imitations of Juvenal to his friend Wrangham in November, 1795, and on the 20th of that month he wrote:—

“Soon after I left you, I completed something like an imitation, though extremely periphrastic, from Juvenal. I will transcribe it for you to correct, in some future letter. In the meantime, the following verses are at your service to insert in the poem, if you think them worth it. There is not a syllable correspondent to them in Juvenal.”

He first quotes twenty-eight lines, and then adds:—

“The two last verses of this extract were

Coleridge and Wordsworth

given me by Southey, a friend of Coleridge.” He continues: “I have said nothing of Racedown. It is an excellent house, and the country far from unpleasant; but, as for society, we must manufacture it ourselves. Will you come, and help us? We expect Montagu at Christmas, and would be very glad if you could come along with him. Have you any interest with the book-sellers? I have a poem which I wish to dispose of, provided I could get anything for it. I recollect reading the first draught of it to you in London. But since I came to Racedown I have made alterations and additions so material that it may be looked on almost as another work.” He refers to his verses on “Guilt and Sorrow.”

On the 30th of November, 1795, Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Marshall:—

“I never more fully intended anything in my life than to write to you very soon after my arrival at Racedown. . . . We are now

Wordsworth at Racedown

surrounded with winter prospects without doors, and within have only winter occupations—books, solitude, and the fireside ; yet, I may safely say, we are never dull. Basil is a charming boy ; he affords us perpetual entertainment. Do not suppose from this that we make him our perpetual plaything : far otherwise. I think that is one of the modes of treatment most likely to ruin a child's temper and character ; but I do not think there is any pleasure more delightful than that of marking the development of a child's faculties, and observing his little occupations.

“ We found everything at Racedown much more complete with respect to household conveniences than I expected. You may judge of this when I tell you that we have not had to lay out ten shillings on the house. We were a whole month without a servant, but now we have got one of the nicest girls I ever saw. She suits us exactly, and I have all my domestic concerns so

Coleridge and Wordsworth

arranged that everything goes on with the utmost regularity. . . . We walk about two hours every morning. We have many very pleasant roads about us ; and, what is a great advantage, they are of a sandy soil, and almost always dry. We can see the sea, if we go two hundred yards from the door ; and, at a little distance, we have a very extensive view terminated by the sea, seen through different openings of the unequal hills. We have not the warmth and luxuriance of Devonshire, although there is no want either of wood or cultivation ; but the trees appear to suffer from the sea-blasts. We have hills, which—seen from a distance—almost take the character of mountains ; some cultivated nearly to their summits, others in a wild state covered with furze and broom. These delight me the most, as they remind me of our native wilds.

“Our common parlour is the prettiest little room that can be, with very good furniture,

Wordsworth at Racedown

a huge box on each side of the fire, a marble chimney-piece, with stove and an oil-cloth for the floor. The other parlour is rather larger, has a good carpet, has sideboards in the recesses on each side of the fire, and has, upon the whole, a better appearance; but we do not like it half so well as our little breakfast-room.

“ A little brook which runs at the distance of one field divides us from Devonshire. . . .” [She added that the peasants were miserably poor; their cottages being “shapeless structures of wood and clay,” “not at all beyond what might be expected in savage life.”]

“ Mr. Montagu intended being with us a month ago, but we have not seen him yet. I have the satisfaction of thinking that he will see great improvements in Basil.”

On the 19th March, 1796, Dorothy wrote again to Mrs. Marshall :—

“ RACEDOWN, *Sunday night*.

“ You ask to be informed of our system . . .

Coleridge and Wordsworth

respecting Basil. It is a very simple one, so simple that, in this age of systems, you will hardly be likely to follow it. We teach him nothing at present, but what he learns from the evidence of his senses. He has an insatiable curiosity, which we are always careful to satisfy. It is directed to everything. . . . Mary Hutchinson" (afterwards Mrs. Wordsworth) "is staying with us. She is one of the best girls in the world, and we are as happy as human beings can be, that is, when William is at home : for you cannot imagine how dull we feel when he is away. He is the life of the whole house."

Before this (on February 1, 1796), she had written to Mrs. Marshall, giving an account of the Pinneys' visit, thus :—

"The Pinneys have been with us five weeks, one week at Christmas, and a month since. They left us yesterday. We all enjoyed ourselves very much. They seemed

Wordsworth at Racedown

to relish the pleasures of our fireside in the evening, and the excursion of the morning. They are very amiable young men, particularly the elder. He is two-and-twenty, has a charming countenance, and the sweetest temper I ever observed. He has travelled a good deal in the way of education, been at one of the great schools, and at Oxford, and has always had plenty of money to spend. This, instead of having spoiled him, or made him conceited, has wrought the pleasantest effects. He is well informed, has an uncommonly good heart, and is very agreeable in conversation. He has no profession. His brother has been brought up a merchant. . . . When the weather was fine, they were out generally all the morning, walking sometimes. Then I went with them frequently, riding sometimes, hunting, coursing, and clearing wood," which she adds, "is a very desirable employment, and what all housekeepers would do well to recommend to the young men of their

Coleridge and Wordsworth

household, in such a cold country as this ; for it produces warmth both without and within doors. We have had snow upon the ground this week past. Had we not seen this sight we should have been almost unconscious that we had lived our winter in the country. We have had the mildest weather I ever remember. Till within the last week, we have never wished for a larger fire than prudent people might think themselves authorized to have in a country where coals are expensive.

“I have not spoken of Basil yet. He is my perpetual pleasure, quite metamorphosed from a shivering, half-starved plant to a lusty, blooming, fearless boy. He dreads neither cold nor rain. He has played frequently for an hour or two, without appearing sensible that the rain was pouring down upon him, or the wind blowing about him. . . . Our life affords little incident for letters. We had our neighbours to dine, while our friends—the Pinneys—were with

Wordsworth at Racedown

us. . . . William is going to publish a poem.¹ The Pinneys have taken it to the booksellers. I am studying my Italian very hard. . . .”

A little later in the year, Wordsworth wrote to his friend Mathews: “I am going to Bristol to-morrow, to see those two extraordinary young men, Coleridge and Southey.” At this period dates are somewhat difficult to determine. Correspondents did not always date their letters ; and, when they did, their entries were often erroneous, and many of those they gave are now perplexing. So late as November, 1845, four and a half years before his death, Wordsworth said to Sara Coleridge that her father came to see them at Racedown in 1795 ; and Dorothy wrote to a friend in 1797 : “You had a great loss in not seeing Coleridge. He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. At first I thought him very plain, that is for about

¹ Most probably *The Borderers*.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

three minutes. He is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half-curling, rough black hair. But, if you hear him speak for five minutes, you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but grey, such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression ; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind. It has more of the poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows, and an overhanging forehead.

“The first thing that was read after he came was William's new poem *The Ruined Cottage*,¹ with which he was much delighted ; and, after tea, he repeated to us two acts and a half of his tragedy, *Osorio*. The next morning William read his tragedy, *The Borderers*.”

It was fortunate, both for the brother and the sister, that this Racedown farmhouse

¹ Afterwards part of *The Excursion*.

Wordsworth at Racedown

was—at the time of their entrance—“well stocked with books.”

During the autumn of 1795, the winter of 1795-6, and the summer of 1797, he finished his one tragedy, *The Borderers*. It is extremely probable, as his nephew and biographer suggests, that the subject occurred to him when he lived at Penrith, or visited Keswick—where many ruined castles carry us back to the period of the drama, viz. the reign of Henry III—and Wordsworth himself tells us that he read Redpath's *History of the Borders*, in order that he might understand the local historical allusions.

It is even more noteworthy that during that ever memorable time at Racedown, his sister's influence over the poet developed in many ways. As he wrote afterwards at Grasmere :

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears.

He said that before they came to live together :

Coleridge and Wordsworth

I too exclusively esteemed that love,
And sought that beauty, which (as Milton says)
Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down
This over-sternness.

He wrote that, but for his sister's influence, the self-confidence of his nature would have kept him like

A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
Familiar, and a favourite of the stars :
But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
And teach the little birds to build their nests
And warble in its chambers.¹

More than this. In the autobiographic analysis of himself, and of the state of mind he passed through when in France, and after his return to England—which he narrates in the eleventh book of *The Prelude*—in the period of unsettlement which followed, when the scrutinizing intellect was at work and he lost all sense of conviction, giving up for a time every moral problem in despair, and was on the verge of becoming like “the Solitary,” whom he afterwards de-

¹ *The Prelude*, Book XIV, ll. 251–256.

Wordsworth at Racedown

scribed in *The Excursion*—then it was that, travelling together on foot through Yorkshire dales and Cumbrian valleys, his sister corrected his despondency, brought him back from what was almost misanthropy, and—as he put it—

Maintained for me a saving intercourse
With my true self; . . .
She whispered still that brightness would return;
She in the midst of all, preserved me still
A poet, made me seek beneath that name,
And that alone, my office upon earth.¹

Elsewhere he writes of her :

Her voice was like a hidden brook that sang;
The thought of her was like a flash of light,
Or an unseen companionship.²

Again :

Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
Could they have known her, would have loved;
methought
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,

¹ *The Prelude*, Book XI, ll. 341-348.

² *The Recluse*, Book I, Part I, ll. 91-93.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

And everything she looked on should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them and to all creatures.¹

It was all a process of gradual development. Nothing in Wordsworth's life was abrupt. He learned by slow degrees that "peace settles where the intellect is meek"; and the renewed influence of Nature's voice, along with that of his sister's,

led him back through opening day
To those sweet counsels between head and heart
Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with
peace.²

No poet in the world's history was ever so happy as Wordsworth was, in the unselfish and continuous ministry of a devoted sister. Nay, from Chaucer downwards, we find none in the annals of English literature who was so fortunate in the service rendered by all the women who surrounded him.

This rare devotion, however—with all its unselfish tenderness—could not have done

¹ *The Prelude*, Book XII, ll. 165-171.

² *The Prelude*, Book XI, ll. 352-354.

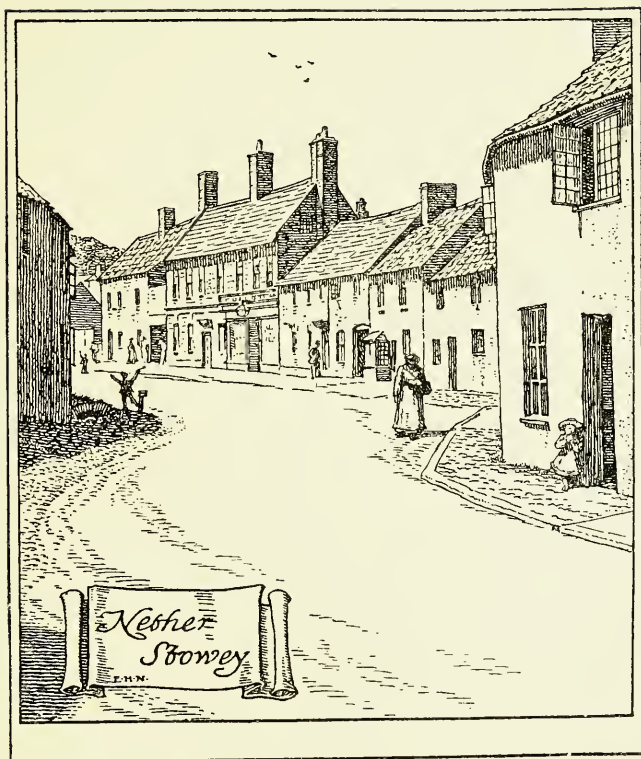
Wordsworth at Racedown

so much for Wordsworth as it did, had it not been accompanied by that wonderful insight which Dorothy possessed. She had quite as clear and delicate a perception of the rarer beauties of Nature, which the common eye never sees, as her brother had. Superabundant evidence of this will be found in the *Journals* which she wrote at Alfoxden, and afterwards at Grasmere. They disclose an intellectual second-sight, and a knowledge born of love, which made both the brother and the sister poets. It was her insight and her service combined that made her so invaluable a companion to Wordsworth.

CHAPTER III

COLERIDGE'S ARRIVAL AT STOWEY. HIS CORRESPONDENCE, ETC.

COLERIDGE'S correspondence with Thomas Poole, before he settled at Stowey in December, 1796, and while negotiations were proceeding for the acquisition of the "wayside cottage" there, cannot be reproduced in full. It can scarcely even be summarized in this book; but one of the letters (December 11) in which he tried to meet Poole's objections to his taking the cottage, has an autobiographic value. In it he wrote: "I mean to work very hard, as cook, butler, scullion, shoe-cleaner, occasional nurse, gardener, hind, pig-protector, chaplain, secretary, poet, reviewer, and *omnium-botherum* shilling-scamper. . . ." "If I live at Stowey, you indeed *can* serve



Coleridge's Arrival at Stowey

me effectually by assisting me in the acquirement of agricultural practice. If you can instruct me to manage an acre and a half of land, and to raise on it (with my own hands) all kinds of vegetables and grain, enough for myself and my wife, and sufficient to feed a pig or two, you will have served me most effectually, by placing me out of the necessity of being served. . . . In the name of Heaven, what can Cottle or Estlin do for me? They do nothing who do not teach me to be independent of any except the Almighty Dispenser of Sickness and Health. . . . My habits and feelings have suffered a total alteration. I hate company, except that of my dearest friends, and systematically avoid it, and when in it keep silence, so far as social humanity will permit me. Lloyd's father inquired how I should live without any companions? I answered him: 'I shall have six companions: my Sara, my babe, my own shaping and disquisitive mind, my books, my beloved friend Thomas Poole,

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and lastly Nature, gazing at me in a thousand looks of Beauty, and speaking to me with a thousand melodies of Love. If I were capable of being tired with all these, I should then detect a vice in my nature, and would fly to habitual solitude to eradicate it.' My objects (assuredly wise ones) are to learn agriculture (and where should I get instruction except at Stowey?) and to be where I can communicate in a literary way. God bless you, and . . .

"S. T. COLERIDGE."

This was his first letter. In the evening he wrote a second (endorsed December 12, 1796), which he continued on the 13th: ". . . I heard from Birmingham that Lloyd's father should insist on his son's returning to him at the close of one twelvemonth. What am I to do then? I shall be again afloat on the wide sea, unpiloted and unprovisioned. I determined to devote *my whole day* to the acquirement of practical

Coleridge's Arrival at Stowey

horticulture, to part with Lloyd immediately, and live without a servant. . . .

“If Charles Lloyd and the servant were with me, I must have bought new furniture to the amount of £40 or £50, which, if not impossibility in person, was impossibility’s first cousin. We determined to live by ourselves. We arranged our time, money, and employment. We found it not only practicable, but easy. . . . With only two rooms, and two people—their wants severely simple—there can be no great labour in their waiting upon themselves. I should have devoted my whole head, heart, and body to my acre and a half of garden-land, and my evenings to Literature. What had I to ask of my friends? Not money, not their interest. I can accept no place in State, Church, or dissenting Meeting. Nothing remains possible but a School, or Writer to a newspaper, or my present plan. I could not love the man who advised me to keep a school, or write for a newspaper.

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. . . To pass across my garden once or twice a day for five minutes, to set me right and cheer me with the sight of a friend's face, would be more to me than hundreds. . . . But Literature, though I shall never abandon it, will always be a secondary object with me ; and I would rather be an expert, self-maintaining gardener, than a Milton, if I could not unite both. . . .”

A few days afterwards he wrote to John Thelwall: “ I am not fit for *public* life: yet the light shall stream to a far distance from the taper in my cottage window.”

On the 30th of December, 1796, Coleridge left Bristol with his wife and child, to live in the humble cottage at Nether Stowey, which soon afterwards became closely associated with his “poetic prime.”

The first literary thing he did, after his arrival at that cottage-home, was to add to the poems he had already written, and which had been published by Cottle ; and to plan out a second edition, for which

Coleridge's Arrival at Stowey

he had begun to prepare in the year 1796.

Cottle offered him twenty guineas for an edition of five hundred copies of that volume; but there seems to have been much delay in the printing of it, as it was not completed till March, 1797, when Coleridge wrote to Cottle that Charles Lloyd had given him ten of his poems to be included in the book, and that he would hand them over to be printed, after Charles Lamb's poems were inserted. It is clear from this that Coleridge wished that there should be a sort of tripartite authorship.

There is little to record as to the early months of Coleridge's settlement at Stowey; and, in fact, until Wordsworth's arrival, he led a disturbed and somewhat distracted life. Sheridan asked him to write a play for the Drury Lane Theatre; and he worked on it at desultory intervals during the autumn, until—in the October of that year—he sent in the MS. of *Osorio*. Meanwhile,

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he was carrying on much self-imposed, untoward, unremunerative, and resultless work, by preaching in Unitarian chapels near at hand—at Bridgwater and Taunton—without any arrangement or offer of reward.

The most helpful thing that befell and befriended him, during these early months at Stowey, was the free access which he had at all times to the excellent library of Thomas Poole close at hand, of which he made almost daily use ; while in the mornings he taught his pupil, Charles Lloyd. Gradually, however, his funds got very low ; and in June, 1797, Poole saw that something of a very practical kind must be done for him. In the realization of this, he obtained the help of one or two friends, whose names are unrecorded. It is needless to enter on particulars as to these sad days. For details, the reader must consult Mr. Dykes Campbell's *Life* of the poet. The chief events to Coleridge in the earlier half of the year

Coleridge's Arrival at Stowey

1797 were his visit to Wordsworth at Race-down, and the publication of a new edition of his *Poems*.

The volume was issued under the title *Poems by S. T. Coleridge, second edition, to which are added Poems by Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd* (printed by N. Biggs for J. Cottle, Bristol, and Messrs. Robinson, London). A great deal that was in the first edition was very prudently left out. The new pieces included a dedicatory poem to his brother George, a revised version of his *Ode to the Departing Year*, two new sonnets on the birth of his child Hartley, and the companion poem on The Æolian Harp, entitled *Reflections on having left a place of retirement* (which was Clevedon), and the *Religious Musings* in an altered form. But as his best biographer, Mr. Dykes Campbell, points out,¹ "Nothing in the volume gives the least hint that Coleridge was already on the latch of the magic casements

¹ See his *Life*, p. 69.

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which were to open on the perilous seas sailed by *The Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*."

The small house at Stowey, "to be let at seven pounds a year," which Poole advised him to take, although it was in a somewhat unsatisfactory state, is referred to in a letter to his friend and benefactor, endorsed "December, 1796." In it he said: "We might Rumfordize one of the chimneys. I can endure cold, but not a cold room. If we can contrive to make two rooms warm and wholesome we will laugh in the faces of gloom and ill-lookingness." The cottage was entered in the Christmas week of 1796.

On February 6, 1797, he wrote to his friend Thelwall: "We are very happy, and my little David Hartley grows a sweet boy. I raise potatoes and all manner of vegetables; have an orchard, and shall raise corn (with the spade) enough for my family. We have two pigs, and ducks and geese. A cow would not answer to keep, for we have whatever milk we want from T. Poole."

Coleridge's Arrival at Stowey

Mrs. Sandford writes, however, that "Mrs. Coleridge was not altogether wrong when she remembered the house as a miserable cottage ; and, indeed, the day was not far distant when Coleridge himself could write of it as "the old hovel." It was afterwards transformed into a small public-house, and even then was a better and larger house than it was when Coleridge inhabited it ; for its size was increased by the addition of a miscellaneous block of buildings at the back.

In Coleridge's time it would seem to have consisted of two small and rather dark parlours, one on each side of the front door, looking straight into the street ; with a small kitchen behind, wholly destitute of modern conveniences, and where the fire was made on the hearth in the most primitive manner conceivable. There cannot have been more than three, or at most four bedrooms above. The back door gave access to a long strip of kitchen-garden, along the bottom of which was the lane through which was the means

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of access into Tom Poole's garden, which ran down from another part of it.

It is said that Coleridge—after preaching a remarkable sermon at Bridgwater—walked to Racedown to see Wordsworth ; and it is reported that he wrote from Racedown two letters to his friend Estlin, who had been made the treasurer of a fund, organized by Thomas Poole, “asking him to give Mrs. Fricker and Mrs. Coleridge five guineas each out of the subscription money.”

It is pleasant, along with the record of these slight financial details, to remember how Coleridge wrote to Cottle, telling him that Wordsworth admired his tragedy, which, he added, “gives me great hopes” ; and that, in a fit of rather extravagant eulogy, he continued that Wordsworth's drama is “absolutely wonderful. . . . There are in it those profound truths of the human heart, which I find three or four times in *The Robbers* of Schiller, and often in Shakespeare, but in Wordsworth there are no inequalities.”

Coleridge's Arrival at Stowey

It is very difficult—I fear quite impossible—for anyone now to follow and trace out the dates of all Coleridge's visits from Stowey to Racedown in the early summer of 1797. I do not myself think that there was more than one of them [already recorded in detail]. But it is certain that on the 2nd of July in that year he returned from Racedown to Stowey, bringing back with him both Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. They stayed in the Stowey cottage for a fortnight before they went on to Alfoxden, there to settle as tenants in that somewhat remarkable home. It had been Coleridge's wish, and was now his realized achievement, to have his friend and brother-bard living so near to him that they could have frequent, if not daily, meetings. It was this that led Wordsworth—doubtless on Coleridge's suggestion—to migrate from Racedown to Alfoxden ; and it was doubtless the impression produced on the latter, during his friend's ever-memorable first visit, which led him

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to write that wonderful description of Dorothy :—

“ Wordsworth and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman indeed !—in mind, I mean, and heart : for her person is such that, if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her rather ordinary ; if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty ! but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion her most innocent soul outbeams so brightly that who saw would say—

Guilt was a thing impossible to her.

Her information is various ; her eye watchful in minutest observation of Nature ; and her taste a perfect electrometer. It bends, protrudes, and draws in at the subtlest beauties, and the most recondite faults.”



Coleridge's Cottage: Nether Stowey

CHAPTER IV

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE AND WILLIAM
WORDSWORTH TOGETHER IN SOMERSET

COLERIDGE wrote to the Rev. J. P. Estlin from Stowey in 1797: "Our house is better than we expected. There is a comfortable bedroom and sitting-room for C. Lloyd, and another for us, a room for Nanny, a kitchen and outhouse. Before our door a clear brook runs, of very soft water;¹ and in the back yard is a nice well of fine spring water. We have a very pretty garden, large enough to find us vegetables and employment; and I am already an expert gardener, and both my hands can exhibit a callum² as testimonials for their industry. We have likewise a sweet orchard; and, at

¹ This no longer exists.

² A piece of hard skin.

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the end of it, T. Poole has made a gate, which leads into his garden, and from thence either through the tan-yard into his house, or else through his orchard over a fine meadow into the garden of a Mrs. Cruikshank, . . . an old acquaintance who married on the same day as I did, has now a little girl younger than David Hartley."

On February 6, 1797, he wrote to John Thelwall :—

"Dr. Darwin¹ will no doubt excite your respectful curiosity. On the whole, I think he is the first *literary* character in Europe, and the most original-minded man. . . . I never go to Bristol. From seven till half-past eight I work in my garden. From breakfast till twelve, I read and compose ; then read again, feed the pigs, poultry, etc., till two o'clock ; after dinner, work again till tea ; from tea till supper, *review*. So jogs the day, and I am happy. I have society, my friend

¹ The father of Charles Darwin.

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T. Poole, and as many acquaintances as I can dispense with.

“There are a number of very pretty young women in Stowey, all musical, and I am an immense favourite, for I pun, conundrum-wise, *listen*, and dance. The last is a recent acquirement. God bless you, and your affectionate,

“S. T. COLERIDGE.”

In Joseph Cottle's *Early Recollections* we find the following letter from Coleridge to him, of which the date was probably incorrectly given as “June, 1797” :—

“MY DEAR COTTLE,

“I am sojourning for a few days at Racedown, the mansion of our friend Wordsworth. . . . Wordsworth admires my tragedy, which gives me great hopes. He has written a tragedy himself. I speak with heartfelt sincerity, and (I think) unbiassed judgment, when I tell you that I feel myself *a little man*

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by his side ; and yet I do not think myself the less man than I formerly thought myself. His drama is absolutely wonderful. You know that I do not commonly speak in such abrupt and unmingled phrase, and therefore will the more readily believe me. T. Poole's opinion of Wordsworth is that he is the greatest man he ever knew ; I coincide. God bless you.

“ S. T. COLERIDGE.”

Coleridge was at Taunton on June 5, 1797, and “ on the evening of that, or the next day, he arrived on foot at Racedown, some forty miles distant,” says Mr. Ernest Coleridge.

Writing to Southey in July, 1797, Coleridge said : “ I had been on a visit to Wordsworth's, at Racedown, near Crewkerne, and I brought him and his sister with me, and here I have *settled them*. By a combination of curious circumstances a gentleman's seat, with a park and woods, elegantly and completely furnished, with nine lodging

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rooms, three parlours, and a hall, in the most beautiful and romantic situation by the sea-side, four miles from Stowey—this we have got for Wordsworth *at the rate of twenty-three* pounds a year, taxes included ! The park and woods are *his* for all purposes *he* wants them, and the large gardens are altogether and entirely his. Wordsworth is a very great man, the only man to whom, *at all times and in all modes of excellence*, I feel myself inferior ; the only one I mean *whom I have yet met with*, for the London *literati* appear to me to be very much like little potatoes, i.e. no great things, a compost of nullity and dullity.

“ Charles Lamb has been with me for a week.¹ He left me Friday morning. The second day after Wordsworth came to me, dear Sara emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot, which confined me during the whole time of C. Lamb’s stay, and still pre-

¹ Charles Lamb’s visit to Stowey lasted from July 7 to July 14, 1797.

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vents me from all walks longer than a furlong. While Wordsworth, his sister, and Charles Lamb were out one evening, sitting in the arbour of T. Poole's garden, which communicates with mine, I wrote these lines, with which I am pleased."¹ I quote most of them, because they contain the best poetic description that exists of Coleridge's cottage-garden, and of what was to be seen in it and from it :—

This lime-tree bower my prison ! I have lost
Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
Had dimmed mine eyes to blindness ! They, meanwhile,
Friends whom I never more may meet again,
On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told ;
The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the mid-day sun ;
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
Flings arching like a bridge ; that branchless ash,
Unsunned and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves

¹ The lines were entitled *This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison*, beginning, "Well, they are gone, and here I must remain."

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Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still
Fanned by the waterfall! and there my friends
Behold the dark green pile of long lank weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone.

Now, my friends emerge
Beneath the wide wide heaven and view again
The many-steepled tract magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two isles
Of purple shadow! Yes! they wander on
In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
And hungered after Nature, many a year,
In the great city pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain,
And strange calamity! Ah! slowly sink
Behind the western ridge, thou glorious sun!
Shine in the slant-beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!
Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
And kindle, thou blue Ocean! so my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet He makes
Spirits perceive his presence.

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A delight

Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there ! Nor in this bower,
This little lime-tree bower, have I not marked
Much that has soothed me. Pale beneath the blaze
Hung the transparent foliage ; and I watched
Some broad and sunny leaf, and loved to see
The shadow of the leaf and stem above,
Dappling its sunshine ! and that walnut-tree
Was richly tinged, and a deep radiance lay
Full on the ancient ivy, which usurps
Those fronting elms ; and now, with blackest mass
Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
Through the late twilight ; and though now the bat
Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters,
Yet still the solitary humble-bee
Sings in the bean-flower ! Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure ;
No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty ! and sometimes
'Tis well to be bereft of promised good,
That we may lift the soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share.

He adds, after quoting the poem :—

“ I would make a shift, by some means
or other, to visit you, if I thought that you

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and Edith Southey would return with me. . . . I have driven back Miss Wordsworth over forty miles of execrable roads, and have always been very cautious, and I am now no inexperienced whip. And Wordsworth, at whose house I am for change of air, has commissioned me to offer you a suite of rooms at this place—which is called Alfoxden—and so divine and wild is the country that I am sure it would increase your stock of images ; and three weeks' absence from Christchurch will endear it to you. Edith Southey and Sara may not have another opportunity of seeing one another, and Wordsworth is very solicitous to know you. Miss Wordsworth is a most exquisite young woman in her mind and heart. I pray you write me immediately. God bless you, and your affectionate,

“ S. T. COLERIDGE.”

Reference has been already made to Wordsworth's toil over his tragedy, and

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his friends' appreciation of it. Coleridge's admiration, although most genuine, was excessive. In 1796 he wrote to Poole to come to hear it read under the trees at Nether Stowey; and he afterwards wrote to the publisher Cottle thus, offering his own tragedy and Wordsworth's together: "I am requested by Wordsworth to put to you the following question: What could you conveniently and prudently, and what would you give, first, for our two tragedies, with small preface. (The tragedies are together five thousand lines, which when printed in dialogue-form, with directions respecting actors and scenery, are at least equal to six thousand.) Second, Wordsworth's 'Salisbury Plain' and 'Tale of a Woman,'¹ with a few others which he will add, will make a volume?"

Cottle writes that he replied to this, offering "Mr. Coleridge and Mr. Wordsworth thirty guineas each, as proposed, for their

¹ His *Guilt and Sorrow*.

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two tragedies ; but this, after some hesitation, was declined, from the hope of introducing one or both upon the stage. The volume of poems was left for future arrangement."

But, as time went on, Coleridge managed—either through Tom Poole, or his brother—to get *The Borderers* introduced to Mr. Harris, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, London, "who promised to give his answer immediately ; and, if he accepts it, to put it in preparation without an hour's delay."¹

On the 20th November, 1797, Dorothy Wordsworth wrote : "William's play is finished, and sent to the managers of the Covent Garden Theatre. We have not the faintest expectation that it will be accepted."

On December 21st, 1797, Dorothy Wordsworth wrote from Bristol to a correspondent unknown : ". . . We have been in London ; our business was the play, and the

¹ *Early Recollections*, Vol. I, p. 251.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

play is rejected. It was sent to one of the principal actors at Covent Garden, who expressed great approbation, and advised William strongly to go to London to make certain alterations. Coleridge's play is also rejected."

It must never be forgotten, however, that in that lowly abode—now happily secured for posterity and for the nation—Coleridge did his best and most enduring poetic work. But for his residence there, the world would never have received *The Ancient Mariner* and many other poems of his literary manhood. Another point may be noted.

As Mr. Salmon writes:¹ "A characteristic that links the Quantocks with the farther West is the presence of pixies. The pixy is the special Celtic variant of the ordinary fairy or elf, and it only lingers now in the West of England. Its chief homes are on Dartmoor, and in Cornwall; but its presence on Exmoor, and the Quantocks proves con-

¹ *Literary Rambles in the West of England*, p. 261.

In Somerset

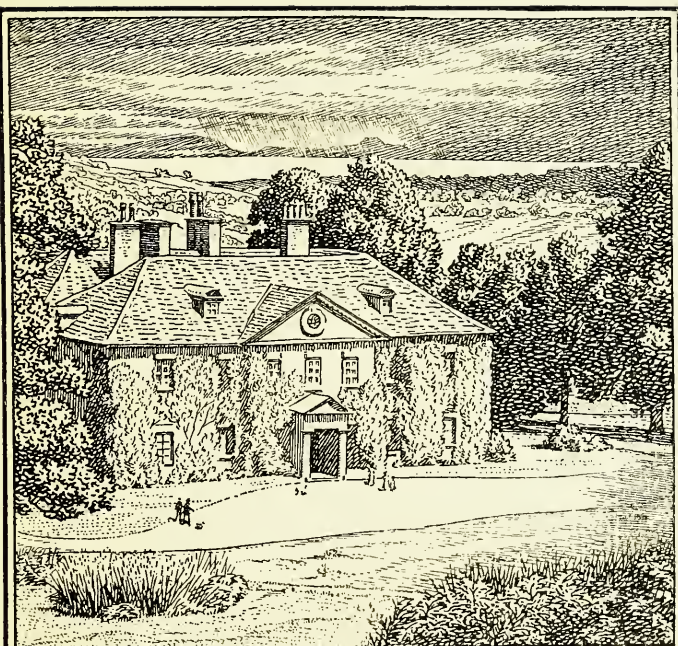
tinuance of Celtic tradition. They are not seen nowadays, for the pixy-folk do not manifest themselves to the incredulous ; but, within living memory, a farmer is said to have seen some threshing his corn in a barn near Holford village." This is quoted not as an accredited fact, but as an instance of the survival of old and widespread belief in younger and less credulous days.

CHAPTER V

COLERIDGE AND THOMAS POOLE

THE modern literary world has come to associate Nether Stowey, and the last decade of the eighteenth and the first of the nineteenth century, almost exclusively with two "twin brethren" in the poetic primacy; but it cannot help remembering their allies and coadjutors. The chief of these assuredly was Thomas Poole. He offered, or secured for, Coleridge the tiny cottage in the village "at a nominal rent," although no one can say if it was ever paid, or asked for.

His recognition of the poet is easily understood, but Coleridge's friendship with him was due to several things: his appreciation of the union of inborn intelligence with a thoughtful and discriminative study of



E.H.N.

Alfoxden Park

Coleridge and Thomas Poole

books, and the spectacle of an industrious life, in which the common necessities of existence could be met and paid for by hard labour, without the expenditure of a great sum of money. The combination of literary sympathy—a knowledge of, and love for Literature—with the toil of an expert handicraftsman, had a great fascination for Coleridge. Other friends at this period of his life were more one-sided men than Thomas Poole. Charles Lloyd, who lived with him for a time, was a recluse invalid. Estlin was a schoolmaster and a preacher. Charles Lamb—the best friend he (probably) ever had—was only an office-clerk, although one of the rarest letter-writers of his own, or of any other time ; but Thomas Poole was *a worker with his own hands*, a practical producer of what all his fellow-men needed every day of their lives. He was thus one of the best examples of helpful industry, combined with continuous and devoted study of what transcends all industrial success.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

All who have read Mrs. Henry Sandford's book, entitled *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, know this right well ; but few perhaps can realize completely what it was for Coleridge to escape betimes from his tiny cottage into that fine old house behind his garden, and the tannery, in which Poole kept his books, and there to read at leisure as he liked. He wrote to Poole on November 5, 1796 :—

“To live in a beautiful country, and to enure myself as much as possible to the labours of the field, have been for this year part my dream of the day, my sigh at midnight ; but to enjoy these blessings *near you*, to see you daily, to tell you all my thoughts in their first birth and to hear yours, to be mingling identities with you, as it were ! the vision-weaving fancy has often pictured such things, but *hope* never dared whisper a promise. Envy me not this immortal draught, and I will forgive all thy persecutions.”

Coleridge and Thomas Poole

Wordsworth wrote of Poole as follows :—

“During my residence at Alfoxden I used to see much of him, and had frequent occasions to admire the course of his life, especially his conduct to his labourers and poor neighbours. Their wishes he carefully encouraged, and weighed their faults in the scales of charity. He was much beloved by distinguished persons, Mr. Coleridge, Mr. Southey, Sir H. Davy, and many others.”

De Quincey described him as “a stout, plain-looking farmer, leading a bachelor life in a rustic old-fashioned house ; the house, however, proving to be amply furnished with modern luxuries, and especially with a good library, superbly mounted in all departments, bearing on political philosophy ; and the farmer turning out a polished Englishman, who had travelled extensively, and had so entirely devoted himself to the service of his humble fellow-countrymen—the hewers of wood and drawers of water in

Coleridge and Wordsworth

this southern part of Somersetshire—that for many miles round he was the general arbiter of their disputes, the guide and counsellor of their difficulties, besides being appointed executor and guardian to his children by every third man who died in or about the town of Nether Stowey.”

The letters addressed to Poole by Coleridge before he went to Stowey are not quoted, or referred to, in this book. They will be found in the two volumes of his grandfather's letters, edited by Mr. Ernest Coleridge. In subsequent chapters of this one many other references to Poole occur. That ever kind and most generous, as well as careful man, soon found out that Coleridge was in a mass of financial troubles, and was himself thinking of many possible exits from them, e.g. (1) the founding of a fresh newspaper ; (2) becoming the minister in a Unitarian pulpit ; but was never thinking either of supplying his wife with “a home”

Coleridge and Thomas Poole

that she could call her own, or of doing anything for his own permanent maintenance.

There is no doubt that the Stowey cottage was a refuge—and in some respects a real home to him—mainly because of the kindness of Thomas Poole ; and as they lived so near they could if they wished see each other almost daily. Coleridge wrote :—

And now, beloved Stowey ! I behold
Thy church-tower, and methinks the four huge elms
Clustering, which mark the mansion of my friend ;
And close behind them, hidden from my view,
Is my own lowly cottage, where my babe
And my babe's mother dwell in peace !

The chief interest to posterity in the Stowey cottage is doubtless due to the fact that here the long preliminary musings, which gave birth to *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*, began, and that in it were composed *The Nightingale* and other poems of his prime.

What Wordsworth wrote at Alfoxden was not equal to what Coleridge wrote or planned out at Stowey. Wordsworth

Coleridge and Wordsworth

gathered the material in Somerset, which he afterwards worked up into poetic form ; but neither in *The Danish Boy* nor in *Simon Lee* did he do his best, and in the later poem he took the scene away from Somerset to Wales. He wrote *The Thorn* and the far less successful *Idiot Boy* at Alfoxden ; also *Peter Bell*, which is far from his best poem of its class or kind. A far better, though a somewhat trivial poem, based on a small incident which occurred during an earlier visit to the ruins of Goodrich Castle, in Monmouth, was written (but left unfinished) at Alfoxden.

We should remember, however, that both the *Idiot Boy* and *Peter Bell* by Wordsworth, and the *Lines to a Young Ass* by Coleridge, were the outcome of the somewhat erratic poetic theory, elaborated by the two poets at that time, that *no subject was too trivial for the poet's touch*, and that an ignoble theme might even glorify a poem taken from a very humble episode in

Coleridge and Thomas Poole

rustic life. It is difficult to justify the *Anecdote for Fathers*—suggested by a childish remark made by Basil Montagu—of the exchange of “Liswyn Farm” for “Kilve’s smooth shore by the green sea.”

The following extract from T. H. Escott’s book, entitled *Society in the Country House*, will be of some use to students of this period :—

“Towards the close of the eighteenth century there lived on the Egmont estate, in the shadow of Enmore Castle, the most remarkable man in the neighbourhood, Thomas Poole, a born book-lover and critic, the friend and adviser alike of rich and poor. To him wrote the poet William Wordsworth, begging Poole’s good offices with Cruikshank, Lord Egmont’s agent, to enable the poet to take a small house at Adcombe, not far from the spot now occupied by Quantock Lodge. Wordsworth had been attracted to the neighbourhood by the fact

Coleridge and Wordsworth

of his friend S. T. Coleridge being already settled at Nether Stowey. Without some intermediary of unimpeachable respectability, Wordsworth had already received practical proof of the hopelessness of being suitably housed in that high Tory district. An application for Alfoxden had been indeed already made by him, and refused on the ground of his seditious sympathies. Thomas Poole brought forward evidence of his friend's real innocence and harmlessness. Eventually the poet secured the tenancy of Alfoxden for £40 a year,¹ deer-park and all. The place thus became as important a landmark as Rydal itself in the evolution of the Lake poets. At Alfoxden itself, as Wordsworth's guest, Coleridge wrote both his *Fears in Solitude* and his *Ode to Liberty*. Wordsworth desired to continue his tenancy. The St. Albyn owners had been plied with

¹ It will be seen that Coleridge wrote to Wordsworth (July, 1795) that the rate was to be "twenty-three pounds a year, taxes included."

Coleridge and Thomas Poole

renewed reports of the poet's revolutionary associations. Before renewing the lease, they sent down a detective to make inquiries. This officer of the law happened to possess a very long nose. Following Wordsworth and Coleridge in one of their frequent walks, he heard them talk about the philosopher Spinoza. To the keen ear of the Bow Street official, the strange word implied some uncomplimentary comment on his nasal organ. Thus wounded at a sensitive point, he reported so unfavourably of the poets that the non-renewal of the lease prevented Wordsworth from prolonging his residence beyond the year."

CHAPTER VI

COLERIDGE AND SOUTHEY

THIS is of necessity, like the last, a short chapter. Southey—although born in Bristol—was not much in the Somerset group, of which Wordsworth and Coleridge were the chiefs, who made that district of England poetically famous. He was a Westminster boy, and went from his school to Balliol College, Oxford. He became a friend of Coleridge, and was captivated by the “Pantisocracy” scheme. In his youth he was much in Portugal. Although one of the three poets who were afterwards erroneously grouped together as those of “The English Lakes,” his permanent fame—and it is a lasting one—was based not on his poems, but on his vast literary output in miscellaneous directions (in which he had no superior) and on

Coleridge and Southey

his *Letters*, many of which are monumental.

It is unnecessary in this book to refer to such collateral things as Coleridge's misunderstanding with Southey towards the close of 1795. But it may be as well to mention the facts of his correspondence with him (as they were brothers-in-law) during his earlier years. While Coleridge wrote to Southey, before he settled at Stowey in 1796, some fourteen letters in all—twelve in 1794, two in 1795—and one in 1797, Southey wrote none to Coleridge before 1800, only one in 1802, one in 1803, and two in 1804. Of course, the value or importance of these letters is not here estimated, but the difference in their number is significant.

On the 23rd of May, 1801, Southey wrote to his friend, John May, from Lisbon : “I am no ways weary of Portugal. It would be the country of my choice, residence certainly, its climate so exactly suits me ; and its materials now afford me ample employment.”

Coleridge and Wordsworth

Again, on August 19th of the same year, he wrote to another friend, Grosvenor C. Bedford : “ I love the South. To England I have no strong tie ; the friends whom I love live so widely apart that I never see two in a place ; and, for acquaintance, they are to be found everywhere. Thus much for the future ; for the present I am about to move to Coleridge, who is at the Lakes. . . . If you have not seen the second volume of Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads*, I counsel you to buy them ; and to read *aloud* the poems entitled *The Brothers* and *Michael*, which, especially the first, are to me excellent. I have never been so much affected, and so *well*, as by some passages there. God bless you.—Yours as ever,

“ ROBERT SOUTHEY.”

He wrote again to his friend Grosvenor C. Bedford : “ Keswick, Sept. 6th, 1801. . . . My dreams incline to Lisbon as a resting-place. I am really attached to the country ;

Coleridge and Southey

and—odd as it may seem—to the people.”
“Cintra is my paradise! the heaven on earth of my hopes. . . .”

Although I am not putting into this volume any reminiscences of Wordsworth and Coleridge after they left Somersetshire, I may include part of a letter from Southey, who was afterwards closely associated with them. It is addressed to Miss Barker, and is written from—

“KESWICK, *Feb.*, 1804.

“*O Maria Sanctissima!* Mount Horeb, with the glory upon its summit, might have been more glorious, but not more beautiful, than old Skiddaw in his winter pelisse of ermine. I will not quarrel with frost, though the fellow has had the impudence to take me by the nose. The lakeside has such ten thousand charms; a fleece of snow, or of the hoar-frost, lies on the fallen trees, or large stones; the grass-points, that just peer above the water, are powdered with diamonds; the ice on the margin with chains of crystal,

Coleridge and Wordsworth


and such veins and wavy lines of beauty as mock all art ; and, to crown all, Coleridge and I have found out that stones thrown upon the lake when frozen, make a noise like singing birds ; and, when you whirl on it a large flake of ice, away the shivers slide, chirping and warbling like a flight of finches.”

This extract from a letter of Southey’s puts him, *me judice*, almost on the level of the two Wordsworths, and of Coleridge, as a delineator of Nature.

Another extract from a later letter, sent by Southey from Greta Hall on February 16th, 1804, may be added here, as it is a further instance of his rare felicity as a letter-writer :—

“ DEAR GROSVENOR,—I have seen a sight more dreamy and wonderful than any scenery that fancy ever yet devised for fairyland. We had walked down to the lakeside : it was a delightful day, the sun shining, and a few white clouds hanging motionless in the sky. The opposite shore of Derwentwater

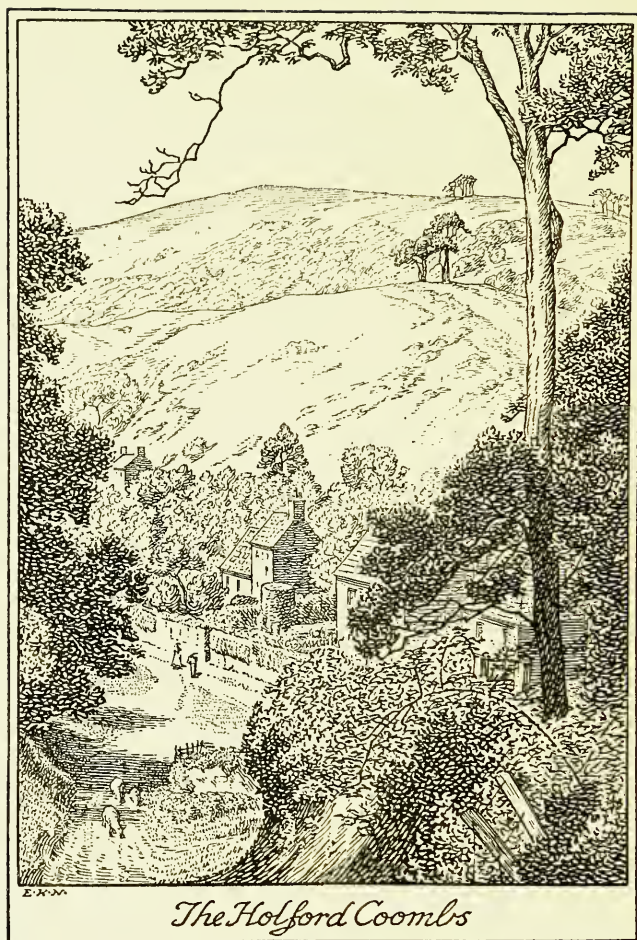
Coleridge and Southey

consists of one long mountain, which suddenly terminates in an arch thus, , and through that opening you see a long valley between mountains, and bounded by mountain beyond mountain ; to the right of the arch the heights are more varied, and of greater elevation. Now, as there was not a breath of air stirring, the surface of the lake was so perfectly still, that it became one great mirror, and all its waters disappeared : the whole line of shore was represented as vividly and steadily as it existed in its actual being—the arch, the vale within, the single houses far within the vale, the smoke from their chimneys, the furthest hills, and the shadow and substance joined at their bases so indivisibly, that you could make no separation, even in your judgment. As I stood on the shore, heaven and the clouds seemed lying under me : I was looking down into the sky, and the whole range of mountains, having one line of summits under my feet and another above me, seemed to be suspended

Coleridge and Wordsworth

between the firmaments. Shut your eyes, and dream of a scene so unnatural and so beautiful. What I have said is most strictly and scrupulously true ; but it was one of those happy moments that can seldom occur, for the least breath stirring would have shaken the whole vision, and at once unrealized it. I have before seen a partial appearance, but before never did, and perhaps never again may lose sight of the lake entirely ; for it literally seemed like an abyss of sky before me, not fog or clouds from a mountain, but the blue heaven spotted with a few fleecy billows of cloud that looked placed there for angels to rest upon them.”

This passage has no connection with Somerset, and it is only inserted here from its being an apt illustration of Southey’s descriptive power, and from the close relation in which he stood to the other poets of the Cumbrian district.



The Holford Coombs

CHAPTER VII

THE QUANTOCK HILLS

THE Quantock Hills of North Somerset are perhaps more worthy of special mention—both as regards their scenery and their literary associations—than they have as yet received, except in local guide-books and county chronicles. It is as a district associated with—if not hallowed by—the residence in it of these two great twin-poets of our English renaissance literature, to whom this volume is devoted, that I have to deal with them ; but they deserve more than one visit by the lovers both of the picturesque and of the reposeful in scenery. Their wonderfully beautiful “coombs,” i.e. small valleys leading up to the watersheds of the district, are a delightful solace to the wearied

Coleridge and Wordsworth

residents in all the towns that lie near the main track of the railway to the south-west of England.

It can never be forgotten by the students of English literature that it was in this district that the monumental *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge were born ; but I have already written so much about both of these two pioneers, that I prefer to put into this book the words of other appreciative men.

Mr. Arthur L. Salmon writes in his *Literary Rambles in the West of England*:¹ “The spirit of Wordsworth was experiencing the soothing influences of Nature, and of his sister’s society at Racedown, and was recovering its tone, which had been impaired by the disappointments of the French Revolution. In no narrow sense, the poet was being ‘born again.’ It was here that he wrote his *Guilt and Sorrow*, his tragedy of *The Borderers*, and the far finer ‘Ruined

¹ p. 250.

The Quantock Hills

Cottage,' which became incorporated in the first book of *The Excursion*.

"The perfect solitude of the place, and its rusticity, entirely delighted the poet and his sister; indeed, the sister wrote later: 'I think Racedown is the place dearest to my recollections upon the whole surface of the island. It was the first home I had.' When Coleridge came in 1797 the three were ripe for mutual friendship. The young men compared notes, shared each other's literary aspirations and ideals, read each other's poems: Dorothy Wordsworth added the gracious touch of femininity."

I think that Mr. Salmon is justified in saying of Wordsworth that "his genius was as fully at home in Somerset as among the grander hills of the Lake Country."¹

Although these Quantock Hills have a rare sylvan beauty of their own, and their coombs (which are pastoral valleys) are unique in their way, they now are—and

¹ p. 253.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

will probably continue to be—more famous with posterity as the temporary resting-place of the two illustrious men connected with the Literature of England. These kindred spirits were drawn to the district by profound mutual affinity, and by corresponding ideals. It was a happy magnetism that brought Coleridge from Clevedon, and Wordsworth from Racedown, to the district of Stowey. Thomas Poole—one of the veteran “statesmen” of Stowey—was the chief resident in it, and he attracted both men ; but many visitors, from Charles Lamb downwards—including Southey, De Quincey, Hazlitt, Humphry Davy, Thelwall, etc.—were drawn to them, and were detained as associate guests.

Some time in the autumn of 1799 (the date is unascertainable) Coleridge wrote to John Thelwall—who had asked him if possible to procure him a cottage at Stowey, or near it—that he had received an answer from his friend Chubb that he would under-

The Quantock Hills

take to do so, "provided it was thought *right* that he should settle there, but this he left for T. Poole and Coleridge to settle." "Consequently," adds Coleridge, "the whole returns to its former situation ; and the hope which I had entertained that you could have settled without the remotest interference of Poole *has vanished*. There are insuperable difficulties. . . . Very great odium T. Poole incurred by bringing *me* here. My peaceable manner and known attachment to Christianity had almost worn it away when Wordsworth came ; and he, likewise by T. Poole's agency, settled here. You cannot conceive the tumult, calumnies, and apparatus of threatened persecutions which this event has occasioned round about us. If *you*, too, should come, I am afraid that even riots, and dangerous riots, might be the consequences. Either of us separately would perhaps be tolerated ; but all three together, what can it be less than a school for the propagation of demagoguery and atheism, etc."

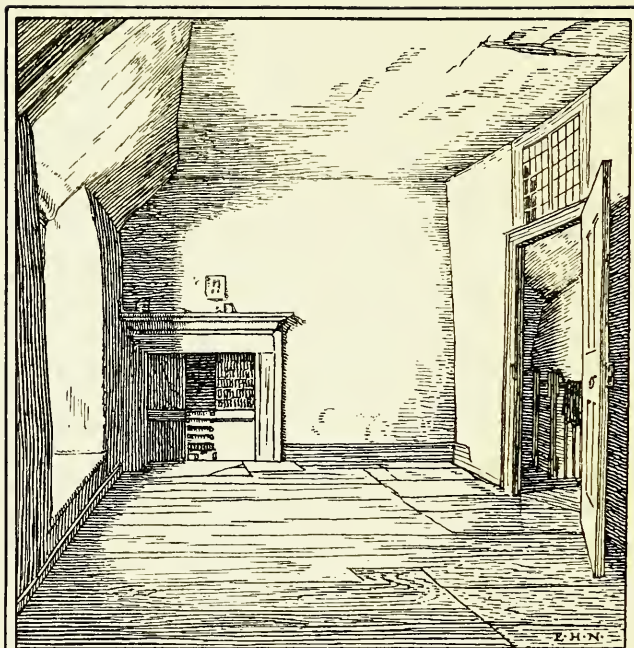
Coleridge and Wordsworth

Some amusing if not quite authentic anecdotes about the "spy" will be found in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.¹ Although therefore Thelwall's visit to the district brought both of the poets into transient trouble, it was not serious, and soon passed away.

At the same time, as Mrs. Henry Sandford says in her *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, Wordsworth's "sister was as great a mystery to the rustic imagination as he was himself. The profound seclusion in which they lived, the incomprehensible nature of their occupation, their strange habit of frequenting out-of-the-way and untrodden spots, the very presence of an unexplained child that was no relation to either of them, all combined to produce an impression of awe and mistrust. Mrs. St. Albyn became alarmed, . . . and finally Wordsworth received notice to quit in June, 1798."²

¹ Chapter X.

² Vol I, p. 240.



Interior of Coleridge's Cottage 1906

CHAPTER VIII

THE COLERIDGE COTTAGE AT NETHER STOWEY

MANY readers of this book will know that the Coleridge cottage at NetherStowey has been acquired for posterity, and is now the property of the Nation; but it may be wise to mention one or two things in reference to the acquisition of this historic dwelling-place, and to devote a chapter to its story.

In doing so, I avail myself of what has been ably written by the Rev. William Greswell, lately rector of Dodington, one of the foremost of those who promoted the scheme for the purchase of the cottage by the National Trust, preparing the way for it—along with the late Canon Ainger, of Bristol—in super-

Coleridge and Wordsworth

intending a local committee for the protection of the building.

Mr. Greswell has written a valuable paper for the Trust on the history of the cottage, which it is impossible for me to reproduce in full. It is procurable, however, without difficulty by all who are interested in the subject. I quote from it :—

“Inscribed on the tablet affixed to the Nether Stowey cottage are the words, ‘Here S. T. Coleridge made his home, 1797-1800.’ The one reason which induced him to settle at Nether Stowey was his desire to be near his friend Thomas Poole. We have it on his own authority that to be ‘in the sight of this friend’s face’ was the desire of his heart, and that if this wish could be realized life would go well with him.

“At one time Acton, a village in Gloucestershire, was suggested to Coleridge by Poole himself as a place of abode, but Coleridge rejected it with scorn. The country round

The Coleridge Cottage

Acton was too flat and monotonous, and the poet declared that he ‘would as soon live on the banks of a Dutch canal.’ ”

In words already quoted, Coleridge wrote: “I shall have six companions : my Sara, my babe, my own shaping and disquisitive mind, my books, my beloved friend Thomas Poole, and lastly, Nature looking at me with a thousand looks of beauty and speaking to me in a thousand melodies of Love.” All this was to be got at Nether Stowey, and at Nether Stowey alone.

“At first it was not easy to find a home for Coleridge in the village itself. There was a place called Adscombe in the neighbouring parish of Over Stowey, at the entrance of the romantic coomb of Seven Wells under the Quantocks. Here, centuries ago, the monks of the Benedictine Abbey of Athelney, King Alfred’s foundation, had a small lodgment, and the ruins of Adscombe Chapel still survive. . . .

“The Adscombe plan, however, fell

Coleridge and Wordsworth

through, and probably it was fortunate that such was the case ; for, notwithstanding its romantic situation, and old-world associations of monks and friars (for Franciscan Friars as well as Athelney Benedictines were to be found there, and gave a name to ‘Fryarn’ and ‘Fryarn Wood’ up Seven Wells), Coleridge would have been too far off from his friend Poole for such daily and hourly intercourse as he desired. But fortunately the cottage in Lime Street became available, being the last house on the west side of Nether Stowey, with a good garden and orchard attached to it. This is the poet’s own account of his abode, in a letter written to his friend the Rev. J. P. Estlin [Stowey, 1797]:—

““ Our house is better than we expected. There is a comfortable bedroom and sitting-room for C. Lloyd, and another for us, a room for Nanny, a kitchen and outhouse. Before our door a clear brook runs, of very soft water ; and in the back yard is a nice well of

The Coleridge Cottage

fine spring water. We have a very pretty garden, large enough to find us vegetables and employment ; and I am already an expert gardener, and both my hands can exhibit a *callum* as testimonials of their industry. We have likewise a sweet orchard, and at the end of it T. Poole has made a gate, which leads into his garden, and from thence either through the tan-yard into his house, or else through his orchard over a fine meadow into the garden of a Mrs. Cruikshank (the wife of Lord Egmont's steward), an old acquaintance, who married on the same day as I, and has got a girl a little younger than David Hartley. Mrs. Cruikshank is a sweet little woman, of the same size as my Sara, and they are extremely cordial. T. Poole's mother behaves to us as a kind and tender mother. She is very fond indeed of my wife, so that, you see, I ought to be happy, and, thank God, I am so.'

“The only topographical puzzle is the mention of ‘the clear brook before our door’

Coleridge and Wordsworth

which must have been running down Lime Street. This must not be confused with the brook which flowed, and still flows, down Castle Street in front of Poole's doors. It must have been a continuation of a mill-leet, or mill-race, on the west side of the Coleridge Cottage garden and orchard, and dividing his little place from the present glebe ground, used now as allotment grounds. At that date neither the western annexe of the Coleridge Cottage, nor the house and grounds, now occupied by Mr. Moore, and formerly part of the orchard with the garden plot adjoining, were built ; and the western and south-western views towards Bincombe, and the ridges of Quantock, were unobstructed.

“ ‘ And now,’ writes one, ‘ I will give you a short account of the house. It is very small and very simple. Three rooms below and three above, all small. The window to my room has no opening, but a pane of glass is made to slide in and out by a piece of wire. But simple as the structure is, it shelters us

The Coleridge Cottage

well ; and I have delightful society, and am therefore quite content. Here you can be happy without superfluities. Coleridge has a fine little boy about nine or ten months old, whom he has named David Hartley—for Hartley and Bishop Berkeley are his idols, and he thinks them two of the greatest men that ever lived. This child is a noble, healthy-looking fellow, has strong eyebrows and beautiful eyes. It is a treat, a luxury, to see Coleridge hanging over his infant and talking to it, and fancying what he will be in future days.' . . .

“ William and Dorothy Wordsworth were guests before and after they settled at Alfoxden, and, doubtless, frequent visitors during their year of residence (July, 1797—July, 1798) in the ‘large mansion in a large park’ which they rented for £23 per annum. In July, 1797, Charles Lamb was a fellow-guest with the Wordsworths, and enjoyed ‘a few pleasant holidays’ after, and in spite of, much tribulation. In the August of the

Coleridge and Wordsworth

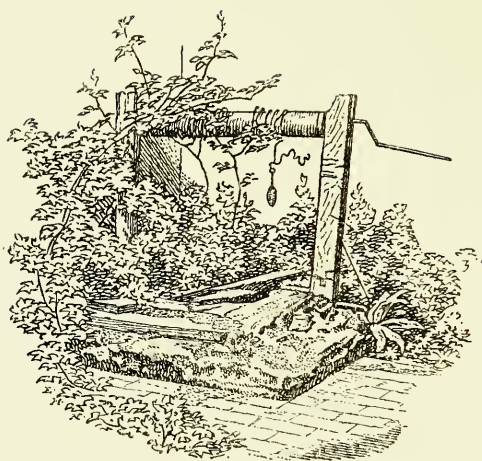
same year John Thelwall, republican lecturer and elocutionist, made his way to Stowey and slept at the cottage, an unbidden but not unwelcomed guest.

“A year later (August—September, 1799) Robert Southey and his wife, who was sister to Mrs. Coleridge, passed some weeks with his brother-in-law, once more his friend.

“Once, too, came Coleridge’s publisher, Joseph Cottle, a kind friend if an unwise biographer, who has left us a pleasant picture of the summer-house—perhaps in Poole’s garden, perhaps in the orchard—‘with its tripod table laden with delicious bread and cheese and surmounted by a brown mug of the true Taunton ale.’

“It was, indeed, as Coleridge might have said, a *harbourous*, that is, guest-loving, and hospitable abode.

“In pleasant contrast to the obscurity which hangs over the cottage at Clevedon, occupied by Coleridge just before the Nether Stowey period, there is a great deal of trust-



The Well

The Coleridge Cottage

worthy evidence available about his abode in Lime Street. Originally it was a small thatched cottage (it is now tiled) with four rooms—two bedrooms and two sitting-rooms—looking out into the village street, as now. The side window of the left-hand sitting-room was a later addition. The back kitchen, the well with its old-fashioned windlass, the back premises, and the outhouses are there as formerly. The bay tree, sheltering what may be called ‘the Bay Tree Plot,’ has flourished as far as the memory of man can take us back. The original garden and orchard have been divided, and the western portion of them came to be occupied by another house and garden, owned in 1909 by Mr. Moore. But a good strip of what was the old orchard (boasting perhaps three or four surviving apple trees) is still attached to the Coleridge Cottage, and leads right up to the gateway that was originally made by Thomas Poole to facilitate the visits of the poet, but is now built up and stopped. The

Coleridge and Wordsworth

original Poole property, which in Coleridge's time probably included a block of land to the west of Castle Street and adjoining the present Castle House boundaries as they now exist, has fallen into the hands of various owners. The tannery can be traced, as can the stream and mill-leet, together with an ancient barn or outhouse. The village school, close by, stands upon a portion of land given by Poole for the purposes of village instruction, where he himself taught. It is still a standing memorial, in its altered modern aspect, to the worth and piety of its founder and benefactor. His gift was made when there was but small general interest in what may be called public or elementary education.

“On the west of the original Coleridge Cottage itself, and abutting it as a separate building, is a new cottage or annexe, all included in the national purchase. . . .

“The village itself was a small ‘Borough,’ with a market of its own, for centuries.

The Coleridge Cottage

The market cross and clock, together with the stocks, all existed in Coleridge's time.

"The 'Mount' is the most conspicuous feature in the immediate neighbourhood, and must have often arrested the eye of Coleridge whenever he surveyed the landscape from his garden. . . .

"There is nothing very imposing, architecturally, about Nether Stowey church. In Coleridge's time there was a gallery and a string band, which included a 'bassoon,' a new improvement introduced in 1797. This may have suggested those well-known lines in *The Ancient Mariner* :—

The wedding guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

"Coleridge mentions the church-tower in *Fears in Solitude*, and it must have presented the same appearance as at present :—

And now, beloved Stowey ! I behold
Thy church-tower, and, methinks, the four huge elms
Clustering, which mark the mansion of my friend ;
And close behind them, hidden from my view,
Is my own lowly cottage.

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“It is certain, of course, that Coleridge preached for the Rev. Joshua Toulmin, the Unitarian minister at Taunton, and that he took the trouble to walk all the way from Nether Stowey to Taunton—a distance of eleven miles—over Bincombe ridge, to do so. A ‘lay sermon’ from S. T. Coleridge must have been welcome on all and every occasion.

“About the work done at Nether Stowey nothing need be said or repeated here—only this, that in conjunction with William Wordsworth, who came to live at Alfoxden, it became in time a landmark in English literature. The volume known as *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) best explains the meaning and significance of this landmark. Yet the attention of most readers has been mainly directed to the ‘Lake School,’ as it was termed, not to the ‘Land of Quantock’ or the county of Somerset. Nevertheless, with the Southey family sprung from Lydeard St. Lawrence on the west side of the Quantocks, with Coleridge and Tom Poole

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resident at Nether Stowey, and William and Dorothy Wordsworth resident at Alfoxden, (to say nothing of W. L. Bowles, born at Uphill), a further acknowledgment might have been made to Somerset and the Quantock Hills as the cradle of genius and the fountain of poetical and literary inspiration.

“It is needless to observe that the birth of a new poetical era was hardly noticed at the time in the county of Somerset. Nor was it much appreciated outside. The neighbourhood long entertained unworthy suspicions of the doings of Coleridge and especially of Wordsworth (who was fond of Kilve beach, in old days a landing-place and smugglers’ resort), notwithstanding their friendship with such a well-known man as Poole. The story of these suspicions is told in the *Biographia Literaria*, cap. x., and *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, and the fact that a spy was actually sent by the Government to report the doings and sayings of the dangerous *conspirators* has recently been

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established by the discovery of papers preserved in the Home Office.

“Yet it was felt by some who had a wider patriotism and a fuller appreciation of literary work that this neglect could not be permitted to go on. Time had exposed the shallowness of hasty local suspicion, and had proved the good and sturdy citizenship of Robert Southey (a staunch supporter of Church and State), of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge; and time had published and consecrated the honourable friendships and unblemished life of Thomas Poole, who, when he died (September 8th, 1837), was followed to his grave by all the most important men of the countryside.

“In 1890 the original volume entitled *Lyrical Ballads*, revised and edited by Professor Dowden, and a second issue of the same work, edited by Thomas Hutchinson, in 1898, aroused fresh interest in the Stowey period of Coleridge’s life: in 1893 Mr.

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Dykes Campbell published his well-known edition of *Coleridge's Poetical Works*. Matthew Arnold, in his judicious selection from Wordsworth's Poems, had increased the number of admirers of that poet; and so the way was gradually being paved for a better general recognition of the first beginnings and struggling birth of the 'Romantic School of Poetry,' and, more particularly, of its almost unsuspected Quantock inspiration in the county of Somerset: a point in the history of English literature which had been overlooked.

“THE STORY OF THE RECOVERY OF THE COLERIDGE COTTAGE.

“In June, 1893, a few admirers of the works of Coleridge affixed a mural tablet on the cottage in Stowey, and a full account of the ceremony appeared in *The Athenæum* of June 17th, 1893. The money required had been collected by subscription, and it was then resolved to form a small Committee whose object it should be to collect money

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for the preservation and, finally, the purchase of the cottage itself. Canon Ainger had visited the Quantocks in the autumn of that year, and lent the movement the support of his name and influence. Together with Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge and Mr. Dykes Campbell, he was present at the ceremony that attended the affixing of the tablet. The cottage itself had fallen upon somewhat evil days. It had been converted into a public-house, and boasted of a flying sign-board labelled 'The Coleridge Cottage Inn.' The owner was reluctantly persuaded to forego his licence, take down his signboard, and lease the cottage to a Committee for a term of fifteen years, at £15 a year, with option of purchasing it for £600 at the end of the lease in 1908. The sounds of rustic mirth and revelry disappeared from the premises, and there was no further use for the Cider House and Bowling Alley which had been attached to it. At what precise date the cottage had become a village inn is un-

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certain, but at one time after Coleridge's departure a grave Congregationalist minister, known locally as 'Parson Cave,' had dwelt within its walls, and had served the chapel just below. After him an old lady, a Miss Newton, lived there.

"The first Committee of Preservation consisted of the Rev. William Greswell, Rector of Dodington; Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, grandson of the poet; Mr. Dykes Campbell, the editor of his *Poetical Works*; the Rev. J. R. Vernon, and Mr. H. St. Barbe Goldsmith, who became joint lessees of the cottage and garden. New tenants were found for the cottage, and an effort was made to collect public subscriptions. Lord Coleridge, the Chief Justice of England, took much interest in the scheme of preservation and purchase; but his death in 1894 unfortunately deprived the Committee of his support. The late Sir Thomas Dyke Acland also sympathized with the movement, and subscribed to it. But, on the whole, the

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support given was disappointing ; and in 1896 a fresh appeal was made, in *The Athenæum* review of March 21st, for subscriptions to be deposited in aid of the Purchase Fund at Stuckey's Bank, Bridgwater ; the manager of which had kindly consented to act as one of the Local Committee. The result, however, was again disappointing ; and it was clear that, under existing circumstances, the only course open to the Committee was to keep the cottage tenanted, and in good repair, for the term it was rented, and trust to fortune. The responsibility rested chiefly with Mr. Greswell during the fifteen years' lease, and at times the difficulties of keeping the whole scheme, even in a state of suspended animation, were considerable. The preservation of the cottage must be regarded as his work.

“ Professor William Knight, the editor of Wordsworth's Poems—who had already done so much in the North for Dove Cottage—found his way to Nether Stowey in the

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autumn of 1906. The scheme for the purchase and preservation of such an undoubted home of genius as the Coleridge Cottage appealed to him with great force, and it seemed only fit and desirable that as 'Dove Cottage' had been secured as a memorial of Wordsworth in the North, 'Coleridge Cottage' should be perpetuated in the South of England as a memorial to Coleridge.

"Professor Knight addressed himself to the task of collecting funds, and of reorganizing the scheme. He threw out circulars broadcast, and made appeal to the British and American literary world with untiring zeal and energy. Under his auspices a Committee was formed to collect funds for the purchase of the property. The Earl of Lytton kindly acted as Chairman of the Committee, of which the following were members:—The Marquis of Crewe, the Right Hon. James Bryce, the Right Hon. Sir Edward Fry, Canon Beeching, Canon Rawnsley,

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Mr. G. W. Prothero, Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, Mr. J. H. Etherington Smith, and the Rev. William Greswell.

“His Majesty King Edward VII sent a message expressing his approval of the scheme, and wishing the movement success. Her Royal Highness the Princess Louise also gave valuable aid by allowing a meeting to be held in her rooms at Kensington Palace, in support of the fund, on June 7th, 1908, at which she herself presided. On this occasion, and previously at Taunton, on October 1st, 1907, and at Malvern, lectures in aid of the fund were delivered by Mr. Ernest H. Coleridge.

“By the kindness of Mr. Frederick Harrison, the owner of the Haymarket Theatre, a matinée was given for the benefit of the purchase fund on November 13th, 1908. On this occasion *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, and other poems were recited by Miss Lena Ashwell, Miss Honor Brooke, the Bishop of Ripon, Lord

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Coleridge, Professor Knight, Mr. Forbes Robertson, and Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge.

“Mr. Andrew Carnegie, of New York, contributed the sum of £200 to the fund, and a grant of £50 was made by the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty.

“As the result of these gifts, and of the fund raised by Professor Knight, the Committee were able to purchase the property in the summer of 1908; and in the autumn of 1909 it was transferred to the National Trust.

“In the course of a letter read at the drawing-room meeting at Kensington Palace, which he was unable to attend, Professor Knight wrote: ‘It is my belief that these “outward and visible signs” of the life that was led by our greatest poets, in the places where they wrote their immortal works, are valuable national assets: and that they will be welcomed by posterity as amongst its most precious heirlooms.’

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“It was to secure and preserve the Coleridge Cottage as a national possession that it was bought and confided to the care of the National Trust.

“In the cottage are several portraits and pictures given by Lord Coleridge and other members of the Coleridge family, and by Professor Knight. Amongst them are five portraits of the poet, and one of the Rev. George Coleridge, Sara Coleridge, and Lord Coleridge, together with a framed original letter of the poet, and a photograph of some Coleridge Memorials, and of the ‘Pixies-Parlour’ at Ottery St. Mary. There are also portraits of Thomas Poole, Joseph Cottle, and Charles Lamb, of Albert Goodman and Thomas Fanshawe Middleton, as well as photographs of Mr. Gillman’s house at Hampstead, where Coleridge died, and one of Heidelberg Castle from a sketch made by Dora Wordsworth, when she sailed up the Rhine with her father and Coleridge in June, 1829. The above may be regarded as the

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nucleus of what may be a still more interesting collection of portraits, relics, and objects of interest.

“There is also a case containing some of Coleridge’s works, many of important editions contributed chiefly by the members of the Coleridge family.

“Outside the cottage, and in the modern annexe, a Library is being formed, in which it is hoped that a collection may be made of books illustrating both Wordsworth and Coleridge influences. It may possibly become a useful Reference Library. Contributions of books will be gladly welcomed.”

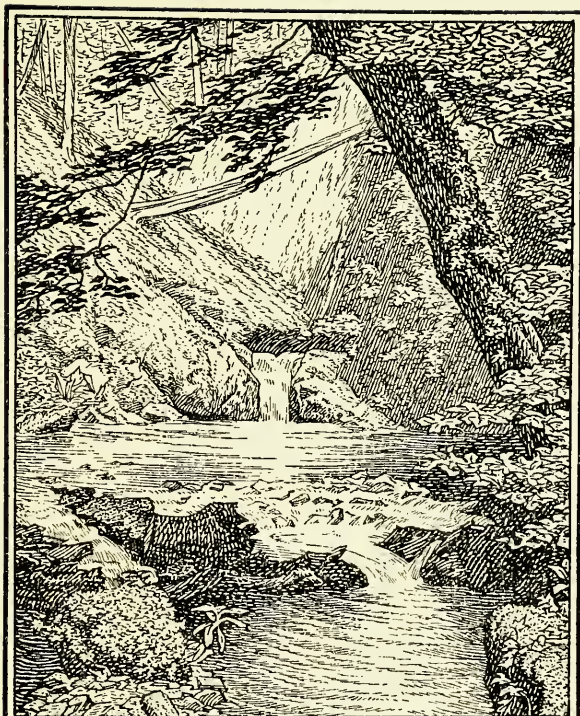
CHAPTER IX

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH'S JOURNAL,
WRITTEN AT ALFOX DEN IN 1798¹

ALFOX DEN

January 20th, 1798. The green paths down the hill-sides are channels for streams. The young wheat is streaked by silver lines of water running between the ridges ; the sheep are gathered together on the slopes. After the wet dark days, the country seems more populous. It peoples itself in the sunbeams. The garden, mimic of spring, is gay with flowers. The purple-starred hepatica spreads itself in the sun, and the clustering snowdrops put forth their white heads, at first upright, ribbed with green ; and like a rosebud when completely opened, hanging their heads downwards, but slowly

¹ In the original MS. there is no title. The above is a descriptive one, given by the editor.



L. 1894.

The Glen

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lengthening their slender stems. The slanting woods of an unvarying brown, showing the light through the thin net-work of their upper boughs. Upon the highest ridge of that round hill covered with planted oaks, the shafts of the trees show in the light like the columns of a ruin.

21st. Walked on the hill-tops—a warm day. Sate under the firs in the park. The tops of the beeches of a brown-red, or crimson. Those oaks, fanned by the sea breeze, thick with feathery sea-green moss, as a grove not stripped of its leaves. Moss cups more proper than acorns for fairy goblets.

22nd. Walked through the wood to Holford. The ivy twisting round the oaks, like bristled serpents. The day cold ; a warm shelter in the hollies, capriciously bearing berries. [Query : Are the male and female flowers on separate trees ?]

23rd. Bright sunshine, went out at three o'clock. The sea perfectly calm ; blue, streaked with deeper colour by the clouds,

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and tongues or points of sand ; on our return of a gloomy red. The sun gone down. The crescent moon, Jupiter and Venus. The sound of the sea distinctly heard on the tops of the hills, which we could never hear in summer. We attribute this partly to the bareness of the trees, but chiefly to the absence of the singing of birds, the hum of insects, that noiseless noise which lives in the summer air.¹ The villages marked out by beautiful beds of smoke. The turf fading into the mountain road. The scarlet flowers of the moss.

24th. Walked between half-past three and half-past five. The evening cold and clear. The sea of a sober grey, streaked by the deeper grey clouds. The half-dead

¹ Compare in Keats' "Miscellaneous Poems" :—

" There crept
A little noiseless noise amongst the leaves
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves."

And Coleridge, in *The Æolian Harp* :—

" The stilly murmur of the distant sea
Tells us of silence."

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sound of the near sheep-bell, in the hollow of the sloping coomb, exquisitely soothing.

25th. Went to Poole's after tea. The sky spread over with one continuous cloud, whitened by the light of the moon ; which, though her dim shape was seen, did not throw forth so strong a light as to chequer the earth with shadows. At once the clouds seemed to cleave asunder, and left her in the centre of a black-blue vault. She sailed along, followed by multitudes of stars, small, and bright, and sharp. Their brightness seemed concentrated (half-moon).

26th. Walked upon the hill-tops ; followed the sheep tracks till we overlooked the larger coomb. Sat in the sunshine. The distant sheep-bells, the sound of the stream ; the woodman winding along the half-marked road with his laden pony ; locks of wool, still spangled with the dewdrops ; the blue-grey sea, shaded with immense masses of clouds, not streaked ; the sheep

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glittering in the sunshine. Returned through the wood. The trees skirting the wood being exposed more directly to the action of the sea-breeze, stripped of the net-work of their upper boughs, which are stiff and erect, like black skeletons; the ground strewn with the red berries of the holly. Set forward before two o'clock. Returned a little after four.

27th. Walked from seven o'clock till half-past eight. Upon the whole an interesting evening. Only once while we were in the wood the moon burst through the invisible veil which enveloped her, the shadows of the oaks blackened, and their lines became more strongly marked. The withered leaves were coloured with a deeper yellow, a brighter gloss spotted the hollies; again her form became dimmer, the sky flat, unmarked by distances, a white thin cloud. The manufacturer's dog makes a strange, uncouth howl, which it continues many minutes after there is no noise near it but

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that of the brook. It howls at the murmur of the village stream.

28th. Walked only to the mill.

29th. A very stormy day. William walked to the top of the hill to see the sea. Nothing distinguishable but a heavy blackness. An immense bough riven from one of the fir trees.

30th. William called me into the garden to observe a singular appearance about the moon. A perfect rainbow, within the bow one star, only of colours more vivid. The semicircle soon became a complete circle, and in the course of three or four minutes the whole faded away. Walked to the blacksmith's and the baker's; an uninteresting evening.

31st. Set forward to Stowey at half-past five. A violent storm in the wood; sheltered under the hollies. When we left home the moon immensely large, the sky scattered over with clouds. These soon closed in, contracting the dimensions of the moon

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without concealing her. The sound of the pattering shower, and the gusts of wind, very grand. Left the wood when nothing remained of the storm but the driving wind, and a few scattering drops of rain. Presently all clear, Venus first showing herself between the struggling clouds ; afterwards Jupiter appeared. The hawthorn hedges, black and pointed, glittering with millions of diamond drops ; the hollies shining with broader patches of light. The road to the village of Holford glittered like another stream. On our return, the wind high ; a violent storm of hail and rain at the Castle of Comfort.¹ All the heavens seemed in one perpetual motion when the rain ceased ; the moon appearing, now half-veiled, and now retired behind heavy clouds, the stars still moving, the roads very dirty.

February 1st. About two hours before dinner, set forward towards Mr. Bartholo-

¹ An inn near at hand.

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mew's.¹ The wind blew so keen in our faces that we felt ourselves inclined to seek the covert of the wood. There we had a warm shelter, gathered a burthen of large rotten boughs blown down by the wind of the preceding night. The sun shone clear, but all at once a heavy blackness hung over the sea. The trees almost roared, and the ground seemed in motion with the multitudes of dancing leaves, which made a rustling sound, distinct from that of the trees. Still, the asses pastured in quietness under the hollies, undisturbed by these forerunners of the storm. The wind beat furiously against us, as we returned. Full moon. She rose in uncommon majesty over the sea, ascending through the clouds. Sat with the window open an hour in the moonlight.

2nd. Walked through the wood, and on to the Downs before dinner ; a warm pleasant air. The sun shone, but was often

¹ Mr. Bartholomew rented Alfoxden, and sublet the house to Wordsworth.

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obscured by straggling clouds. The redbreasts made a ceaseless song in the wood. The wind rose very high in the evening. The room smoked so that we were obliged to quit it. Young lambs in a green pasture in the coomb, thick legs, large heads, black staring eyes.

3rd. A mild morning, the windows open at breakfast, the redbreasts singing in the garden. Walked with Coleridge over the hills. The sea at first obscured by vapour ; that vapour afterwards slid in one mighty mass along the seashore ; the islands and one point of land clear beyond it. The distant country (which was purple in the clear dull air) overhung by straggling clouds that sailed over it, appeared like the darker clouds, which are often seen at a great distance apparently motionless, while the nearer ones pass quickly over them, driven by the lower winds. I never saw such a union of earth, sky, and sea. The clouds beneath our feet spread themselves to the water, and the clouds

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of the sky almost joined them. Gathered sticks in the wood ; a perfect stillness. The redbreasts sang upon the leafless boughs. Of a great number of sheep in the field, only one standing. Returned to dinner at five o'clock. The moonlight still and warm as a summer's night at nine o'clock.

4th. Walked a great part of the way to Stowey with Coleridge. The morning warm and sunny. The young lasses seen on the hill-tops, in the villages and roads, in their summer holiday clothes—pink petticoats and blue. Mothers with their children in arms, and the little ones that could just walk, tottering by their side. Midges or small flies spinning in the sunshine ; the songs of the lark and redbreast ; daisies upon the turf ; the hazels in bloom ; honeysuckles budding. I saw one solitary strawberry flower under a hedge. The furze gay with blossom. The moss rubbed from the palings by the sheep, that leave locks of wool, and the red marks with which they are spotted upon the wood.

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5th. Walked to Stowey with Coleridge, returned by Woodlands ; a very warm day. In the continued singing of birds distinguished the notes of a blackbird or thrush. The sea overshadowed by a thick, dark mist, the land in sunshine. The sheltered oaks and beeches still retaining their brown leaves. Observed some trees putting out red shoots. Query : what trees are they ?

6th. Walked to Stowey over the hills, returned to tea ; a cold and clear evening, the roads in some parts frozen hard. The sea hid by mist all the day.

7th. Turned towards Potsdam, but finding the way dirty, changed our course. Cottage gardens the object of our walk. Went up the smaller coomb to Woodlands, to the blacksmith's, the baker's, and through the village of Holford. Still misty over the sea. The air very delightful. We saw nothing very new, or interesting.

8th. Went up the Park, and over the tops of the hills, till we came to a new and very

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delicious pathway, which conducted us to the coomb. Sat a considerable time upon the heath. Its surface restless and glittering with the motion of the scattered piles of withered grass, and the waving of the spiders' threads. On our return the mist still hanging over the sea, but the opposite coast clear, and the rocky cliffs distinguishable. In the deep coomb, as we stood upon the sunless hill, we saw miles of grass, light and glittering, and the insects passing.

9th. William gathered sticks. . . .

10th. Walked to Woodlands, and to the waterfall. The adder's-tongue, and the ferns, green in the low, damp dell. These plants now in perpetual motion from the current of the air ; in summer only moved by the drippings of the rocks. A cloudy day.

11th. Walked with Coleridge near to Stowey. The day pleasant, but cloudy.

12th. Walked alone to Stowey. Returned in the evening with Coleridge. A mild, pleasant, cloudy day.

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13th. Walked with Coleridge through the wood. A mild and pleasant morning, the near prospect clear. The ridges of the hills fringed with wood, showing the sea through them like the white sky, and still beyond the dim horizon of the distant hills, hanging as it were in one undetermined line between sea and sky.

14th. Gathered sticks with William in the wood ; he being unwell, and not able to go further. The young birch trees of a bright red, through which gleams a shade of purple. Sate down in a thick part of the wood. The near trees still, even to their topmost boughs, but a perpetual motion in those that skirt the wood. The breeze rose gently ; its path distinctly marked, till it came to the very spot where we were.

15th. Gathered sticks in the further wood. The dell green with moss and brambles, and the tall and slender pillars of the unbranching oaks. I crossed the water with letters ; returned to William and Basil. A shower

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met us in the wood, and a ruffling breeze.

16th. Went for eggs into the coomb, and to the baker's ; a hail shower ; brought home large burthens of sticks, a starlight evening, the sky closed in, and the ground white with snow before we went to bed.

17th. A deep snow upon the ground. Wm. and Coleridge walked to Mr. Bartholomew's, and to Stowey. Wm. returned, and we walked through the wood into the coombe to fetch some eggs. The sun shone bright and clear. A deep stillness in the thickest part of the wood, undisturbed except by the occasional dropping of the snow from the holly boughs. No other sound but that of the water, and the slender notes of a red-breast, which sang at intervals on the outskirts of the southern side of the wood. There the bright green moss was bare at the roots of the trees, and the little birds were upon it. The whole appearance of the wood was enchanting ; and each tree, taken singly,

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was beautiful. The branches of the holly pendent with their white burden, but still showing their bright red berries, and their glossy green leaves. The bare branches of the oaks thickened by the snow.

18th. Walked after dinner beyond Woodlands.¹ A sharp and very cold evening; first observed the crescent moon, a thready bow, attended by Jupiter and Venus in their palest hues.

19th. I walked to Stowey before dinner; Wm. unable to go all the way. Returned alone; a fine sunny, clear, frosty day. The sea still, and blue, and broad, and smooth.

20th. Walked after dinner towards Woodlands.

21st. Coleridge came in the morning, which prevented our walking. Wm. went through the wood with him towards Stowey; a very stormy night.

¹ This house was afterwards John Kenyon's,—to whom *Aurora Leigh* is dedicated,—and was subsequently the residence of the Rev. William Nichols, author of *The Quantocks and their Associations*.—ED.

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22nd. Coleridge came in the morning to dinner. Wm. and I walked after dinner to Woodlands ; the moon and two planets ; sharp and frosty. Met a razor-grinder with a soldier's jacket on, a knapsack upon his back, and a boy to drag his wheel. The sea very black, and making a loud noise as we came through the wood, loud as if disturbed, and the wind was silent.

23rd. William walked with Coleridge in the morning. I did not go out.

24th. Went to the hill-top. Sat a considerable time, overlooking the country towards the sea. The air blew pleasantly round us. The landscape mildly interesting. The Welsh hills capped by a huge range of tumultuous white clouds. The sea, spotted with white, of a bluish grey in general, and streaked with darker lines. The near shores clear ; scattered farmhouses, half-concealed by green mossy orchards, fresh straw lying at the doors ; hay-stacks in the fields. Brown fallows, the springing wheat, like a shade of

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green over the brown earth, and the choice meadow-plots, full of sheep and lambs, of a soft and vivid green; a few wreaths of blue smoke, spreading along the ground; the oaks and beeches in the hedges retaining their yellow leaves; the distant prospect on the land-side, islanded with sunshine; the sea, like a basin full to the margin; the dark, fresh-ploughed fields; the turnips of a lively rough green. Returned through the wood.

25th. I lay down in the morning; though the whole day was very pleasant, and the evening fine. We did not walk.

26th. Coleridge came in the morning, and Mr.¹ and Mrs. Cruikshank; walked with Coleridge nearly to Stowey after dinner. A very clear afternoon. We lay sidelong upon the turf, and gazed on the landscape till it melted into more than natural loveliness. The sea very uniform, of a pale greyish blue, only one distant bay, bright and blue as a sky; had there been a vessel sailing up it, a perfect

¹ Of Nether Stowey, the agent of the Earl of Egmont.

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image of delight. Walked to the top of a high hill to see a fortification. Again sat down to feed upon the prospect; a magnificent scene, curiously spread out for even minute inspection, though so extensive that the mind is afraid to calculate its bounds. A winter prospect shows every cottage, every farm, and the forms of distant trees, such as in summer have no distinguishing mark. On our return, Jupiter and Venus before us. While the twilight still overpowered the light of the moon, we were reminded that she was shining bright above our heads, by our faint shadows going before us. We had seen her on the tops of the hills, melting into the blue sky. Poole called while we were absent.

27th. I walked to Stowey in the evening. Wm. and Basil went with me through the wood. The prospect bright, yet *mildly* beautiful. The sea big and white, swelled to the very shores, but round and high in the middle. Coleridge returned with me, as far as the

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wood. A very bright moonlight night. Venus almost like another moon. Lost to us at Alfoxden long before she goes down into the large white sea.

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March 1st. We rose early. A thick fog obscured the distant prospect entirely; but the shapes of the nearer trees, and the dome of the wood, dimly seen and dilated. It cleared away between ten and eleven. The shapes of the mist, slowly moving along, exquisitely beautiful. Passing over the sheep they almost seemed to have more of life than those quiet creatures. The unseen birds singing in the mist.¹

2nd. Went a part of the way home with Coleridge in the morning. Gathered fir-apples afterwards under the trees.

3rd. I went to the shoemaker's. William lay under the trees till my return. Afterwards went to the secluded farmhouse in

¹ Compare *The Recluse*, i. 91 :—

“Her voice was like a hidden bird that sang.”

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search of eggs, and returned over the hill. A very mild, cloudy evening. The rose trees in the hedges and the elders budding.

4th. Walked to Woodlands after dinner, a pleasant evening.

5th. Gathered fir-apples. A thick fog came on. Walked to the baker's and the shoemaker's, and through the fields towards Woodlands. On our return, found Tom Poole in the parlour. He drank tea with us.

6th. A pleasant morning, the sea white and bright, and full to the brim. I walked to see Coleridge in the evening. William went with me to the wood. Coleridge very ill. It was a mild, pleasant afternoon, but the evening became very foggy. When I was near Woodlands, the fog overhead became thin, and I saw the shapes of the Central Stars. Again it closed, and the whole sky was the same.

7th. William and I drank tea at Coleridge's. A cloudy sky. Observed nothing particularly interesting, the distant prospect

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obscured. One only leaf upon the top of a tree—the sole remaining leaf—danced round and round, like a rag blown by the wind.¹

8th. Walked in the Park in the morning. I sate under the fir trees. Coleridge came after dinner, so we did not walk again. A foggy morning, but a clear, sunny day.

9th. A clear, sunny morning, went to meet Mr. and Mrs. Coleridge. The day very warm.

10th. Coleridge, Wm. and I walked in the evening to the top of the hill. We all passed the morning in sauntering about the Park and gardens, the children playing about, the old man at the top of the hill gathering furze; interesting groups of human creatures, the young frisking and dancing in the sun, the elder quietly drinking in the life and soul of the sun and air.

¹ Did this suggest the lines in *Christabel*?—

“The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.”

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11th. A cold day. The children went down towards the sea. William and I walked to the top of the hills above Holford. Met the blacksmith. Pleasant to see the labourer on Sunday jump with the friskiness of a cow upon a sunny day.

12th. Tom Poole returned with Coleridge to dinner, a brisk, cold, sunny day; did not walk.

13th. Poole dined with us. William and I strolled into the wood. Coleridge called us into the house.

.

15th. I have neglected to set down the occurrences of this week, so I do not recollect how we disposed of ourselves to-day.

16th. William, and Coleridge, and I walked in the Park a short time. I wrote to . . . William very ill, better in the evening; and we called round by Potsdam.

17th. I do not remember this day.

18th. The Coleridges left us. A cold, windy morning. Walked with them half-

Coleridge and Wordsworth

way. On our return, sheltered under the hollies, during a hail-shower. The withered leaves danced with the hailstones. William wrote a description of the storm.¹

19th. Wm. and Basil and I walked to the hill-tops, a very cold bleak day. We were met on our return by a severe hailstorm. William wrote some lines describing a stunted thorn.²

20th. Coleridge dined with us. We went more than half-way home with him in the evening. A very cold evening, but clear. The spring seemingly very little advanced. No green trees, only the hedges are budding, and looking very lovely.

21st. We drank tea at Coleridge's. A quiet shower of snow was in the air during more than half our walk. At our return the sky partially shaded with clouds. The horned moon was set. Startled two night birds from the great elm tree.

¹ See *A Whirl-blast from behind the Hill* in the *Poetical Works*.

² See *The Thorn* in the *Poetical Works*.

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22nd. I spent the morning in starching, and hanging out linen ; walked through the wood in the evening, very cold.

23rd. Coleridge dined with us. He brought his ballad finished.¹ We walked with him to the Miner's house. A beautiful evening, very starry, the horned moon.

24th.—Coleridge, the Chesters, and Ellen Cruikshank called. We walked with them through the wood. Went in the evening into the coomb to get eggs ; returned through the wood, and walked in the Park. A duller night than last night : a sort of white shade over the blue sky. The stars dim. The spring continues to advance very slowly, no green trees, the hedges leafless ; nothing green but the brambles that still retain their old leaves, the evergreens, and the palms, which indeed are not absolutely green. Some branches I ob-

¹ This ballad was finished by February 18, 1798. (See *Early Recollections*, by Joseph Cottle, Vol. I, p. 307, 1837.)

Coleridge and Wordsworth

served to-day budding afresh, and those have shed their old leaves. The crooked arm of the old oak tree points upwards to the moon.

25th. Walked to Coleridge's after tea. Arrived at home at one o'clock. The night cloudy but not dark.

26th. Went to meet Wedgwood at Coleridge's after dinner. Reached home at half-past twelve, a fine moonlight night ; half moon.

27th. Dined at Poole's. Arrived at home a little after twelve, a partially cloudy, but light night, very cold.

28th. Hung out the linen.

29th. Coleridge dined with us.

30th. Walked I know not where.

31st. Walked.

April 1st. Walked by moonlight.

2nd. A very high wind. Coleridge came to avoid the smoke ; stayed all night. We walked in the wood, and sat under the trees. The half of the wood perfectly still, while

Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal

the wind was making a loud noise behind us. The still trees only gently bowed their heads, as if listening to the wind. The hollies in the thick wood unshaken by the blast ; only when it came with a greater force, shaken by the raindrops falling from the bare oaks above.

3rd. Walked to Crookham, with Coleridge and Wm. to make the appeal. Left Wm. there, and parted with Coleridge at the top of the hill. A very stormy afternoon. . . .

4th. Walked to the sea-side in the afternoon. A great commotion in the air, but the sea neither grand nor beautiful. A violent shower in returning. Sheltered under some fir trees at Potsdam.

5th. Coleridge came to dinner. William and I walked in the wood in the morning. I fetched eggs from the coomb.

6th. Went a part of the way home with Coleridge. A pleasant warm morning, but a showery day. Walked a short distance

Coleridge and Wordsworth

up the lesser coomb, with an intention of going to the source of the brook, but the evening closing in, cold prevented us. The Spring still advancing very slowly. The horse-chesnuts budding, and the hedgerows beginning to look green, but nothing fully expanded.

7th. Walked before dinner up the coomb, to the source of the brook, and came home by the tops of the hills; a showery morning, at the hill-tops; the view opened upon us very grand.

8th. Easter Sunday. Walked in the morning in the wood, and half way to Stowey; found the air at first oppressively warm, afterwards very pleasant.

9th. Walked to Stowey, a fine air in going, but very hot in returning. The sloe in blossom, the hawthorns green, the larches in the park changed from black to green in two or three days. Met Coleridge in returning.

10th. I was hanging out linen in the

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evening. We walked to Holford. I turned off to the baker's, and walked beyond Woodlands, expecting to meet William, met him on the hill ; a close warm evening . . . in bloom.

11th. In the wood in the morning, walked to the top of the hill, then I went down into the wood. A pleasant evening, a fine air, the grass in the park becoming green, many trees green in the dell.

12th. Walked in the morning in the wood. In the evening up the coomb, fine walk. The Spring advances rapidly, multitudes of primroses, dog-violets, periwinkles, stitchwort.

13th. Walked in the wood in the morning. In the evening went to Stowey. I stayed with Mr. Coleridge. Wm. went to Poole's. Supped with Mr. Coleridge.

14th. Walked in the wood in the morning. The evening very stormy, so we staid within doors. Mary Wollstonecraft's life, etc., came.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

15th. Set forward after breakfast to Crookham, and returned to dinner at three o'clock. A fine cloudy morning. Walked about the squire's grounds. Quaint waterfalls about, around which Nature was very successfully striving to make beautiful what art had deformed—ruins, hermitages, etc. etc. In spite of all these things, the dell romantic and beautiful, though everywhere planted with unnaturalized trees. Happily we cannot shape the huge hills, or carve out the valleys according to our fancy.

16th. New moon. William walked in the wood in the morning. I neglected to follow him. We walked in the park in the evening. . . .

17th. Walked in the wood in the morning. In the evening upon the hill. Cowslips plentiful.

18th. Walked in the wood, a fine sunny morning, met Coleridge returned from his brother's. He dined with us. We drank

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tea, and then walked with him nearly to Stowey. . . .

19th. . . .

20th. Walked in the evening up the hill dividing the coombs. Came home the Crookham way, by "the thorn," and the "little muddy pond." Nine o'clock at our return. William all the morning engaged in wearisome composition. The moon crescent. *Peter Bell* begun.

21st, 22nd, 23rd. . . .

24th. Walked a considerable time in the wood. Sat under the trees, in the evening walked on the top of the hill, found Coleridge on our return, and walked with him towards Stowey.

25th. Coleridge drank tea, walked with him to Stowey.

26th. William went to have his picture taken.¹ I walked with him. Dined at home. Coleridge and he drank tea.

¹ This was the earliest portrait of Wordsworth by W. Shuter. It is now in the possession of Mrs. St. John, Ithaca, U.S.A.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

27th. Coleridge breakfasted and drank tea, strolled in the wood in the morning, went with him in the evening through the wood, afterwards walked on the hills: the moon, a many-coloured sea and sky.

28th, *Saturday*. A very fine morning, warm weather all the week.

May 6th, Sunday. Expected the painter,¹ and Coleridge. A rainy morning—very pleasant in the evening. Met Coleridge as we were walking out. Went with him to Stowey; heard the nightingale; saw a glow-worm.

7th. Walked in the wood in the morning. In the evening, to Stowey with Coleridge who called.

8th. Coleridge dined, went in the afternoon to tea at Stowey. A pleasant walk home.

9th. . . . Wrote to Coleridge.

Wednesday, 16th May. Coleridge, William,

¹ W. Shuter.

Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal

and myself set forward to the Cheddar rocks ;
slept at Bridgwater.

22nd, *Thursday*.¹ Walked to Cheddar.
Slept at Cross.

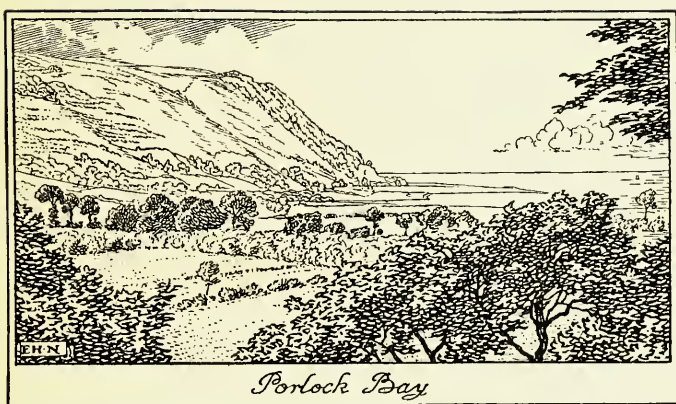
¹ It is thus written in the MS., but the 22nd May, 1798, was a Tuesday. If the entry refers to a Thursday, the day of the month should have been written 24th. Dorothy Wordsworth was not exact as to dates.

CHAPTER X

THE ANCIENT MARINER AND SOME OTHER POEMS

BY far the most important event, in the lives both of Coleridge and of Wordsworth towards the close of their residence in Somerset, was what they did during that ever memorable, and it may be called episodical, walk from Alfoxden along the sea-coast to Lynton. It was “episodical,” because during it was mentally arranged and poetically constructed (although not written out in its final form till long afterwards) Coleridge’s greatest poem, *The Ancient Mariner*.

It should be remembered that the poem is Coleridge’s. Wordsworth contributed only a few lines to it ; but the discussions which the two poets had on the



Porlock Bay

The Ancient Mariner

subject—before the remarkable walk of the trio began, during its continuance, and after their return to Somerset—were such that it may legitimately be thought of as a joint production. Poetic friends such as they were do not measure their work, or count up their debt to one another, by the number of words, sentences, or paragraphs which they respectively contribute to the result.

Wordsworth dictated the following to Miss Fenwick : “ In the autumn of 1797 ”—it was on November 13th—“ Coleridge, my sister, and myself, started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Lynton, and the Valley of Stones near to it ; and, as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem to be sent to the *New Monthly Magazine*. Accordingly we set off, and proceeded along the Quantock hills towards Watchet ; and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of *The*

Coleridge and Wordsworth

Ancient Mariner, founded on a dream, as Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Coleridge's invention, but certain parts I myself suggested ; for example, some crime was to be committed, which should bring upon the old Navigator—as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him—the spectral persecution as a consequence of that crime, and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvock's *Voyages*, a day or two before, that while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or fourteen feet. 'Suppose,' said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.' The incident was thought fit for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to

The Ancient Mariner

do with the scheme of the poem. The Gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time ; at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous afterthought. We began the composition together, on that to me memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular :—

And listened like a three years child :
The Mariner had his will.

“These trifling contributions, all but one (which Coleridge with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded), slipped out of his mind, as well they might. As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening), our respective manners proved so widely different, that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog.

“We returned after a few days from a delightful tour, of which I have many

Coleridge and Wordsworth

pleasant, and some of them droll enough recollections. We returned by Dulverton to Alfoxden. *The Ancient Mariner* grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds ; and we began to talk of a volume which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on natural subjects taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium. Accordingly I wrote *The Idiot Boy*, *Her Eyes are Wild*, *We are Seven*, *The Thorn*, and some others.

“To return to *We are Seven*, the piece that called forth this note, I composed it while walking in the grove at Alfoxden. My friends will not deem it too trifling to relate that . . . I composed the last stanza first, having begun with the last line. When it was all but finished, I came in and recited it to Coleridge and my sister, and said, ‘A prefatory stanza must be added, and I

The Ancient Mariner

should sit down to our tea-meal with greater pleasure if my task was finished.' I mentioned in substance what I wished to be expressed, and Coleridge immediately threw off the stanza thus :—

A little child, dear brother Jem.

I objected to the rhyme 'dear brother Jem' as being ludicrous ; but we all enjoyed the joke of hitching in our friend James T——'s¹ name, who was familiarly called Jem. He was the brother of the dramatist, and this reminds me of an anecdote which it may be worth while here to notice. The said Jem got a sight of the *Lyrical Ballads* as it was going through the press at Bristol, during which time I was residing in that city. One evening he came to me with a grave face and said, 'Wordsworth, I have seen the volume that you and Coleridge are about to publish. There is one poem in it which I earnestly entreat you will cancel ; for, if published,

¹ James Tobin.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

it will make you everlastingly ridiculous.' I answered that I felt much obliged by the interest he took in my good name as a writer, and begged to know what was the unfortunate piece he alluded to. He said, 'It is called *We are Seven*.' 'Nay,' said I, 'that shall take its chance however,' and he left me in despair.

"I have only to add that, in the spring of 1841 I revisited Goodrich Castle, not having seen that part of the Wye since I met the little girl there in 1793.¹ It would have given me greater pleasure to have found in the neighbouring hamlet traces of one who had interested me so much, but that was impossible, as unfortunately I did not even know her name. The ruin, from its position and features, is a most impressive object. I could not but deeply regret that its solemnity was impaired by a fantastic new castle set up on a projection of the same ridge, as if to show how far modern art can go in

¹ See the poem *We are Seven*.

The Ancient Mariner

surpassing all that could be done by antiquity and Nature, with their united graces, remembrances, and associations. I could have almost wished for power, so much the contrast vexed me, to blow away Sir —— Meyrick's impertinent structure, and all the possessions it contains."

The "structure" referred to is Goodrich Court, built in 1828 by Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick, a collector of ancient armour, to receive and exhibit his extensive store. It has been removed from Goodrich to the South Kensington Museum.

It is impossible in this book to refer to the critical estimates of *The Ancient Mariner*, but two descriptive sentences may be quoted from Mr. Stopford Brooke.¹ "Few poems embrace so much, and the work is all of the best class. There are just incidentally touched, but touched with perfect pictorial skill and truth, at least a dozen aspects of the sea: the ship scudding before the stormy

¹ *Theology in the English Poets*, p. 87.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

wind towards the south, with sloping masts and dipping prow; the iceberg-covered sea; the great snow-fog over the ocean, dark by day, glimmering white in the moonshine; the belt of calms with its dreadful rolling swell, and water ‘that like a witch’s oils, burnt green, and blue, and white’; the sea in the tornado; the gentle weather of the temperate seas, and the quiet English harbour. Looking at the shortness of the poem, the range is very great; while its accuracy of description—not the dull accuracy of mere portraiture, but poetical accuracy, the thing itself described but lit up with a glory of feeling, or of association with other things—is very remarkable.”

It is known, from his own testimony, that during his residence at Alfoxden Wordsworth wrote not only *Peter Bell*, but part of the first book of *The Excursion*—that section of it which describes the “ruined cottage on a common,” where he met with “The Wanderer,” although the

The Ancient Mariner

most part of that book had been written at Racedown. *Goody Blake* and *Harry Gill* and the *Anecdote for Fathers* were also written at Alfoxden.

In the following year William Hazlitt came on a visit to Stowey; and, after hearing Wordsworth read his *Peter Bell*, he and Coleridge took the same journey that the former had made with his sister to Lynton. He wrote: "We passed Dunster on our right, a small town between the brow of a hill and the sea. I remember eyeing it wistfully as it lay below us; contrasted with the woody scene around, it looked as clear, as pure, as embrowned and ideal as any landscape I have seen since, of Gaspar Poussin or Domenichino's. We had a long day's march—our feet kept time to the echoes of Coleridge's tongue—through Minehead by the Blue Anchor, and on to Lynton, which we did not reach till near midnight, and where we had some difficulty in making a lodgment.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

“The view in coming along had been splendid. We walked for miles and miles on dark brown heaths overlooking the Channel, with the Welsh hills beyond, and at times descended into little sheltered valleys close by the seaside, with a smuggler’s face scowling by us, and then had to ascend conical hills with a path winding up through a coppice to a barren top, like a monk’s shaven crown, from one of which I pointed out to Coleridge’s notice the bare masts of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon, and within the red-orbed disk of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship in *The Ancient Mariner*. At Lynton the character of the coast becomes more marked and rugged. There is a place called the Valley of Rocks, bedded among precipices overhanging the sea, with rocky caverns beneath, into which the waves dash, and where the seagull for ever wheels its screaming flight. A thunderstorm came on while we were at the inn, and Coleridge ran out

The Ancient Mariner

bareheaded to enjoy the commotion of the elements in the Valley of the Rocks: but, as if in spite, the clouds only muttered a few angry sounds, and let fall a few refreshing drops. Coleridge told me that he and Wordsworth were to have made this place the scene of a prose-tale, which was to have been in the manner of, but superior to, *The Death of Abel*,¹ but they had relinquished the design. In the morning of the second day we breakfasted luxuriantly in an old-fashioned parlour on tea, toast, eggs, and honey, in sight of the beehives from which it had been taken, and a garden full of thyme and wild flowers that had produced it. In this room we found a little worn-out copy of *The Seasons*² lying in a window-seat, on which Coleridge exclaimed, 'This is true fame.'"

"The poem intended to be modelled on

¹ *Der Tod Abels* (1758) by Solomon Gessner, Swiss painter and poet, 1730-1788.

² By James Thomson (1700-1748).

Coleridge and Wordsworth

Gessner's *Death of Abel* was to deal with the wanderings of Cain after the murder, and the two poets were to collaborate. Coleridge dashed off a prose sketch of his portion, but Wordsworth did nothing, and the scheme lapsed."

Mr. Salmon adds that "Coleridge's stay amongst the Quantocks was longer than that of Wordsworth, and he returned to his friend Poole in 1807, when he received a visit from De Quincey. His connection with the district was more fruitful than Wordsworth's, for it embraces his best poetry. . . . Not only *The Ancient Mariner*, but the first part of *Christabel* was written there.

"*Kubla Khan* was the result of a dream in a lonely farmhouse between Porlock and Lynton; the poet, who was in ill-health, having fallen asleep in his chair. When he awaked, he rapidly penned such lines as he could recollect; but unhappily he was interrupted by a visitor, and when again free he found that the dream-poem had slipped

The Ancient Mariner

from his memory. At Stowey also *Remorse* was written, and his finest blank-verse poems, *The Nightingale* and *Frost at Midnight*. This was the 'green and silent spot amid the hills' where he experienced his *Fears in Solitude* and here the exquisite *Love* was born. These are the things by which Coleridge is remembered as a poet, and their birthplace was the Quantock Hills."

Coleridge's own words, in the *Biographia Literaria* (chapter x.), about his work in the Quantock district are remarkable. "I had considered it a defect in *The Task* that . . . throughout the poem the connections are frequently awkward, and the transitions abrupt and arbitrary. I sought for a subject that should give equal room and freedom for description, incident, and impassioned reflections on Men, Nature, and Society, yet supply in itself a natural connection to the parts, and unity to the whole. Such a subject I conceived myself to have found in a stream, traced from its source in the hills among the

Coleridge and Wordsworth

yellow-red moss and conical glass-shaped tufts of bent, to the first break or fall, where its drops became audible, and it begins to form a channel; thence to the peat and turf barn, itself built of the same dark squares as it sheltered, to the sheepfold, to the first cultivated plot of ground, to the lonely cottage and its bleak garden won from the heath; to the hamlet, the villages, the market-town, the manufactories, and the seaport. My walks therefore were almost daily on the top of Quantock, and among its sloping coombs. With my pencil and memorandum book in my hand, I was *making studies* (as the artists call them), and often moulding my thoughts into verse, with the objects and imagery immediately before my senses. Many circumstances, evil and good, intervened to prevent the completion of the poem, which was to have been entitled *The Brook*. Had I finished the work, it was my purpose in the heat of the moment to have dedicated it to our then committee of public safety as

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containing the charts and maps, with which I was to have supplied the French Government in aid of their plans of invasion. And these too for a tract of coast that, from Clevedon to Minehead, scarcely permits the approach of a fishing boat. . . .

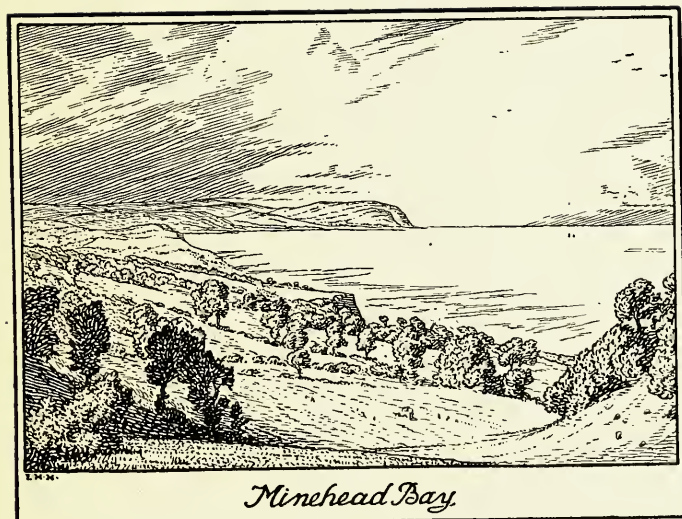
“I retired to a cottage in Somersetshire at the foot of Quantock, and devoted my thoughts and studies to the foundations of religion and morals. Here I found myself all afloat; . . . and it was long ere my ark touched on an Ararat, and rested.”

CHAPTER XI

SOME REMINISCENCES OF 1798 AND
PREVIOUS YEARS BY WILLIAM HAZLITT
AND OTHERS

“**I**N the afternoon Coleridge took me to Alfoxden. . . . Wordsworth was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast. We had free access to her brother’s poems, the *Lyrical Ballads*, which were still in manuscript. I dipt into a few of them with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family portraits of the age of Georges I and II ; and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day could ‘hear the loud stag speak.’¹ That morning, soon

¹ The quotation is from Ben Jonson.



Minehead Bay.

Some Reminiscences

as breakfast was over, we strolled into the park; and, seating ourselves on the branch of an old oak tree, Coleridge read aloud, in a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of *Betty Foy*. I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and Nature, and took the rest for granted. But, in *The Thorn*, *The Mad Mother*, and *The Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman*, I felt that deeper passion and pathos which have since been acknowledged as characteristics of the author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit of poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of a fresh soil, or the first welcome breath of spring. . . .

“Coleridge and I walked back to Stowey that evening; and . . . as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall in the summer moonlight, he lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place; and that, in consequence, there was

Coleridge and Wordsworth

a something corporeal, a *matter-of-factness*, a clinging to the palpable (and often to the petty) in his poetry. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air. It sprang out of the ground, like a flower; or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the goldfinch sang. He said, however, if I remember right, that this objection must be confined to his descriptive poems. His philosophical poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the Universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition rather than by deduction.

“The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge’s cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend’s description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own *Peter Bell*. There was a

Some Reminiscences

severe worn presence of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye—as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance—an intense high narrow forehead,¹ a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantrey's bust wants the marking traits, but he was teased into making it regular and heavy. Haydon's head of him,² introduced into his *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked, very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural

¹ Wordsworth, who read the MS. of Barron Field's *Life of Wordsworth*—still unpublished—wrote on the side of it, "Narrow Forehead. I went through three large magazines of hats in Paris before I could find one large enough, and yet my skull is almost cut away behind"!

² Painted in 1815.

Coleridge and Wordsworth

intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern burr, like the crust in wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and said triumphantly that 'his marriage with experience had not been so unproductive as Mr. Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life.' He had been to see the *Castle Spectre*, by 'Monk' Lewis, while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said, 'It fitted the taste of the audience like a glove.' . . . Wordsworth, looking out of the low-latticed window, said, 'How beautifully the sun *sits on that yellow bank.*' I thought with what eyes these poets see Nature; and, ever after, when I have seen the sunset streaming on the objects facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, and thanked Mr. Wordsworth for having made one for me.

"We went over to Alfoxden the following day, and Wordsworth read us the story of *Peter Bell* in the open air; and the

Some Reminiscences

comment made upon it, by his face and voice, was very different from that of some later critics. Whatever might be thought of the poem, ‘his face was as a book, where men might read strange matters,’¹ and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a chant in the recitation, both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge’s manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth’s more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed dramatic, the other more lyrical. Coleridge has told me that he liked to compose when walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling copses of a pine wood: whereas Wordsworth always wrote—if he could—

¹ Lady Macbeth says (*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene 5):—

“Your face, my Thane, is as a book, where men
May read strange matters.”

Coleridge and Wordsworth

walking up and down on a straight gravel walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruptions.”

The reminiscences by Hazlitt, in reference to this period, are of much value to posterity; and those of Cottle—the publisher of *Lyrical Ballads*—are of equal, if not of greater, interest. His record of the negotiations which led to the publication of that volume is as follows :—

“A visit to Mr. Coleridge at Stowey had been the means of my introduction to Mr. Wordsworth, who read me many of his Lyrical Pieces, when I perceived in them a peculiar but decided merit. I advised him to publish them, expressing a belief that they would be well received. I further said that he would be at no risk; that I would give him the same sum which I had given Mr. Coleridge and Mr. Southey; and that it would be a gratifying circumstance to me

Some Reminiscences

to usher into the world—by becoming the publisher of—the first volumes of three such poets as Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth—a distinction that might never again occur to a provincial publisher.”

On the 12th of April, 1798, Wordsworth wrote thus to the publisher:—

“MY DEAR COTTLE,— . . . You will be pleased to hear that I have gone on very rapidly adding to my stock of poetry. Do come and let me read it to you, under the old trees in the Park. We have a little more than two months to stay in this place. Within these few days the season has advanced with greater rapidity than I ever remember, and the country becoming almost every hour more lovely. God bless you. Your affectionate friend,

“W. WORDSWORTH.”

Soon afterwards Coleridge invited Cottle to see Wordsworth and himself: and on the 9th of May Wordsworth wrote from Alfoxden:

Coleridge and Wordsworth

“DEAR COTTLE,—We look for you with great impatience. I say nothing of *Salisbury Plain* till I see you. I am determined to finish it, and equally so that you shall publish. . . .

“Yours sincerely,

“W. WORDSWORTH.”

Then Coleridge wrote to Cottle as follows :

“MY DEAR COTTLE,

“Neither Wordsworth nor myself could have been otherwise than uncomfortable if any but yourself had received from us our first offer of our tragedies, and of the volume of Wordsworth’s poems. At the same time we did not expect that you could, with prudence and propriety, advance such a sum as we should wish at the time we specified. In short, we both regard the publication of our tragedies as an evil. It is not impossible but that, in happier times, they may be brought on the stage ; and to throw away this chance for a mere trifle

Some Reminiscences

would be to make the present moment act fraudulently and injuriously towards the future time.

“My tragedy employed and strained all my thoughts and fancies for six or seven months. Wordsworth consumed far more time, far more thought, and far more genius. We consider the publication of them an evil on any terms ; but our thoughts were bent on a plan, for the accomplishment of which a certain sum of money was necessary—the whole at that particular time—and, in order to that, we resolved (although reluctantly) to part with our tragedies ; that is, if we could obtain thirty guineas for each, and at less than thirty guineas Wordsworth will not part with the copyright of his volume of poems. We shall offer the tragedies to no one, for we have determined to procure the money some other way. If you choose the volume of poems at the price mentioned, to be paid at the time specified, i.e. thirty guineas, to be paid sometime the last fort-

Coleridge and Wordsworth

night of July, you may have them ; but remember I now write to you merely as a bookseller, and entreat you, in your answer, to consider yourself only.

“ Wordsworth has been caballed against so long and so loudly, that he has found it impossible to prevail on the tenant of the Alfoxden estate to let him the house after the first agreement is expired, so he must quit it at Midsummer. Whether we shall be able to procure him a house and furniture near Stowey we know not, and yet we must : for the hills, and the woods, and the streams, and the sea, and the shores would break forth into reproaches against us, if we did not strain every nerve to keep their poet among them.”

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Cottle added :—

“ In consequence of their conjoint invitation, I spent a week with Mr. Coleridge and Mr. Wordsworth at Alfoxden house ; and during this time (besides the reading of MSS.

Some Reminiscences

poems) they took me to Linmouth, and Linton, and the Valley of Stones.

.

“At this interview it was determined that the volume would be published under the title of *Lyrical Ballads*, on the terms stipulated in a former letter; that this volume should not contain the poem of *Salisbury Plain*, but only an extract from it; that it should not contain the poem of *Peter Bell*, but consist rather of sundry shorter poems; and, for the most part, of pieces more recently written. I had recommended two volumes, but one was fixed on, and that to be published anonymously. It was to be begun immediately, and with *The Ancient Mariner*, which poem I had brought with me to Bristol.”

The following letter to the Rev. J. P. Estlin, Unitarian minister at Bristol, written by Coleridge at the same time that his *Kubla Khan* was composed—has a special

Coleridge and Wordsworth

interest, in its disclosure of what lay deep within the nature of both of the poets: Coleridge's latent and under-working belief, and Wordsworth's reluctance to discuss religious matters even with a specially intimate friend if their "data were dissimilar": Coleridge's testimony is very memorable, that it was his (Wordsworth's) "practice, and almost his nature, to convey all the truth he knows without any attack on what he supposes falsehood, if that falsehood be interwoven with virtues or happiness." It deserves to be written within his biography in letters of gold, for few men knew better than he did "when to keep silence, and when to speak" on the arcana of Religion.

" *May*, 1798.

"I write from Cross, to which place I accompanied Mr. Wordsworth, who will give you this letter. We visited Cheddar, but his main business was to bring back poor Lloyd. . . . But Lloyd (as we found by a letter that met us on the road) is off for

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Birmingham. Wordsworth proceeds, but possibly Lloyd may not be gone ; and likewise to see his own Bristol friends, as he is so near them. I have now known him a year and some months ; and my admiration, I might say my awe, of his intellectual powers has increased even to this hour : and (what is of more importance) he is a tried good man. On one subject we are habitually silent : we found our data dissimilar, and never renewed the subject. It is his practice, and almost his nature, to convey all the truth he knows without any attack on what he supposes falsehood, if that falsehood be interwoven with virtues or happiness. He loves and venerates Christ and Christianity. I wish he did more : but it were wrong indeed if an incoincidence with one of our wishes altered our respect and affection to a man of whom we are, as it were, instructed by our great Master to say that, not being against us, he is for us. His genius is most apparent in poetry, and rarely

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to me—except in *tête-à-tête*—breaks forth in conversational eloquence.

“Believe me with filial and fraternal friendship, your grateful,

“S. T. COLERIDGE.”

Two paragraphs from another letter of Coleridge's to Joseph Cottle—written from Stowey on March 8th, 1798—should have had an earlier place chronologically; but they are relevant anywhere: “The Giant Wordsworth—God love him. Even when I speak in terms of admiration due to his intellect, I fear lest those terms should keep out of sight the amiableness of his manners. . . . He has written more than 1200 lines of blank verse; superior, I hesitate not to aver, to anything in our language which any way resembles it. Poole (whom I feel so consolidated with myself that I seem to have no occasion to speak of him out of myself) thinks of it as likely to benefit mankind much more than anything Wordsworth has yet written.

Some Reminiscences

“ With regard to my poems, I shall prefix the *Maid of Orleans*, 1000 lines, and three blank-verse poems—making all three about 200—and I shall utterly leave out perhaps a larger quantity of lines : and, I think, it would answer you in a pecuniary way to print the third edition humbly and cheaply. My alterations on the *Religious Musings* will be considerable, and will lengthen the poem. . . . God bless you and S. T. C.”

The Nightingale, a Conversational Poem (April, 1798), is an obscure mirror of the “three people with one soul,” as Coleridge so happily put it.

I am of opinion that, during these prolific years, Wordsworth’s influence over Coleridge was stronger, and in its results more enduring, than was Coleridge’s over his great poetic brother. It was not so alert and nimble-witted as Coleridge’s was over all with whom he came into contact ; but it was deeper and more permanent. The rapid assimilative (as well as creative) genius of

Coleridge and Wordsworth

Coleridge seized, and took in with avidity, the earliest touches of Wordsworth's imaginative insight ; but the latter received, and brooded over what he received, before he fully assimilated, or took it in.

But everyone who is even remotely familiar with this literary period, and with the Quantock district of South Britain, must know that Coleridge led in it a tentative and somewhat anxious existence ; notwithstanding his own frequent allusions to happiness. His rare genius was maturing in many and various directions ; but as to such urgent practical matters as his own, and *instar omnium* his family's maintenance—while there was nothing to provide for them, either from himself or from others—the case seemed desperate. It must be owned with sadness that Coleridge had not, at that or at any future time, a real insight into the existing state of affairs, or the requisite practical sagacity to cope with it.

CHAPTER XII

LAST DAYS IN SOMERSET, AND FUTURE MOVEMENTS

IN “January 1798” (thus dated), Coleridge wrote to Wordsworth :—

“You know, of course, that I have accepted the magnificent liberality of Josiah and Thomas Wedgwood.¹ I accepted it on the presumption that I had talents, honesty, and propensities to perseverent effort. I have hoped wisely against myself. I have acted justly. But, dismissing severer thoughts, believe me, my dear fellow, that of the pleasant ideas which accompanied this unexpected event, it was not the least pleasant—nor did it pass through my mind the last in the procession, that I should at

¹ It was a proposal to settle on Coleridge “an annuity of £150, to be regularly paid by us, no condition whatever being annexed to it.”

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least be able to trace the spring and early summer at Alfoxden with you ; and that, wherever your after-residence may be, it is probable that you will be within reach of my tether, lengthened as it now is. The country round Shrewsbury is rather tame. My imagination has clothed it with all its summer attributes : but I still can see in it the possibility beyond that of *beauty*. The Society here were sufficiently eager to have me as their minister ; and, I think, would have behaved kindly and respectfully ; but I perceive clearly that without great courage and perseverance in the use of the monosyllable *No !* I should be plunged in the very *maelstrom* of visiting—whirled round, and round, and round—never changing yet always moving. Visiting, with all its pomps and vanities, is the mania of the place ; and many of the congregation are both rich and expensive. . . .”

On the 30th of January, 1798, Coleridge wrote in a great hurry, in Cottle’s bookshop

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at Bristol: "I received an invitation from Shrewsbury to be the Unitarian minister, and at the same time an order for £100 from Thomas and Josiah Wedgwood. I accepted the former, and returned the latter in a long letter explanatory of my motive, and went off to Shrewsbury, where they were on the point of electing me unanimously, and with unusual marks of affection, when I received an offer from T. and J. Wedgwood of an annuity of £150 to be legally settled on me. Astonished, agitated, and feeling as I could not help feeling, I accepted the offer in the same worthy spirit, I hope, in which it was made, and returned from Shrewsbury."

Shortly afterwards Wordsworth wrote to James Tobin:—

"ALFOXDEN, *March* 6, 1798.

"MY DEAR TOBIN,—I have long wished to thank you for your letter and *Gustavus Vasa*. The tragedy is a strange composition

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of genius and absurdity. . . . There is little need to advise me against publishing : it is a thing which I dread as much as death itself. This may serve as an example of the figure by rhetoricians called hyperbole, but privacy and quiet are my delight. No doubt you have heard of the munificence of the Wedgwoods towards Coleridge. I hope the fruit will be good, as the seed is noble. We leave Alfoxden at midsummer. The house is let to Crewkshank, of Stowey, so our departure is decided. What may be our destination I cannot say. If we can raise the money, we shall make a tour on foot : probably through Wales, and northwards. I am at present utterly unable to say where we shall be. We have no particular reason to be attached to the neighbourhood of Stowey, but the society of Coleridge and the friendship of Poole. News we have none : our occupations continue the same, only I rise early in the mornings.

“ I have written 1300 lines of a poem in

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which I try to convey most of the knowledge of which I am possessed.¹ My object is to give pictures of Nature, Man, and Society. Indeed, I know not anything which will not come within the scope of my plan. . . .”

On March 11 of the same year Wordsworth wrote from Alfoxden to his friend, James Losh, at Carlisle :—

“ . . . Perhaps you have heard of the unexampled liberality of the Wedgwoods towards Coleridge. They have settled an annuity of £150 upon him, for life. We are obliged to quit this place at midsummer. I have already spoken to you of its enchanting beauty. Do contrive to come and see us before we go away. Coleridge is now writing by me at the same table.

“ We have a delightful scheme in agitation, which is rendered still more delightful by a probability which I cannot exclude

¹ Doubtless *The Recluse*, of which *The Excursion* and the *Prelude* were parts.

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from my mind that you may be induced to join in the party. We have come to a resolution—Coleridge, Mrs. Coleridge, my sister, and myself—of going into Germany, where we purpose to pass the two ensuing years, in order to acquire the German language, and to furnish ourselves with a tolerable stock of information in Natural Science. Our plan is to settle, if possible, in a village near a University, in a pleasant and—if we can—a mountainous country. It will be desirable that the place should be as near as may be to Hamburgh, on account of the expense of travelling. What do you say to this? I know that Cecilia Baldwin has great activity and spirit; may I venture to whisper a wish to her that she would consent to join this little colony? I have not forgotten your apprehensions from seasickness: there may be many other obstacles which I cannot divine. I cannot, however, suppress wishes which I have so ardently felt. . . . I have been tolerably industrious

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within the last few weeks. I have written 706 lines of a poem which I hope to make of considerable utility. Its title will be 'The Recluse, or Views of Nature, Man, and Society. . . .'

"Your affectionate friend,
"W. WORDSWORTH."

In April, 1798, Coleridge wrote to his brother, the Rev. George Coleridge:—

" . . . I love fields, and woods, and mountains with almost a visionary fondness"; and to the Rev. J. P. Estlin, in May: "I have now known Wordsworth for a year and some months, and my admiration—I might say my love—for his intellectual powers has increased even to this hour; and, what is of more importance, he is a tried good man.

"S. T. COLERIDGE."

There is both a personal and a literary pathos in the last book of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, in which he refers to that final

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season which the two poets spent in their much-loved Somerset retreats. Helped by the Lloyd legacy, the genius of Coleridge sprang up, joyous in its work, elastic in its expression, jubilant in its tone, original in its outcome, and even triumphant in its results. They were the very happiest days in his troublous and at times tempestuous life.

The Wordsworths left Alfoxden on the 26th of June, 1798, and stayed with the Coleridges at Stowey for a week. Thence they travelled on foot to Bristol, were the guests of Cottle, the poets' publisher, for another week, arranging details as to the issue of *Lyrical Ballads*. From Bristol they crossed the Severn ferry, and walked ten miles to Tintern Abbey on the banks of the Wye. The next day they walked along the banks of the river to Monmouth and Goodrich Castle, going back on the following morning to Tintern, thence to Chepstow, and from Chepstow by boat back to Tin-

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tern, where they slept, returning in a small vessel to Bristol.

Wordsworth wrote: "The Wye is a stately and majestic river from its width and depth, but never slow or sluggish. You can always hear its murmur. It travels through a woody country, now varied with cottages and green meadows, and now with huge fantastic rocks."

It was during this return to Bristol that the immortal poem on Tintern Abbey was composed extemporaneously, and written down on arrival at Bristol—one of the greatest feats in the history of poetic work in England. In his Fenwick note to these lines, the poet said: "No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written

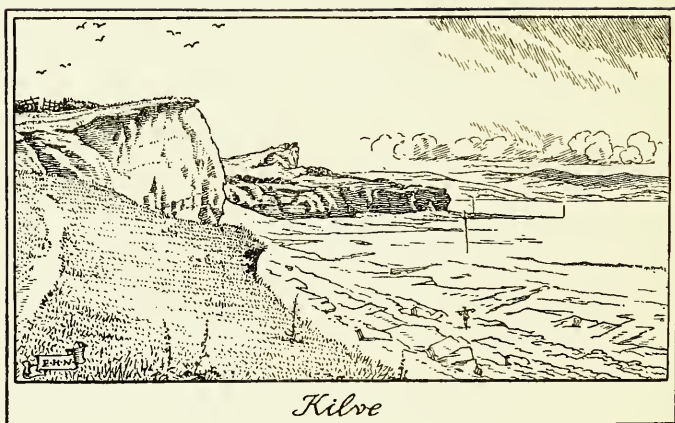
Coleridge and Wordsworth

down till I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after in the little volume of which so much has been said in these notes."

It is quite unnecessary for me to characterize the poems minutely in this book ; and I wish to refer all who are interested in them to the detailed estimates by Mr. Ernest Coleridge, Mrs. Sandford, and myself, written elsewhere.

When the visit to the Wye had ended, Wordsworth took rooms in Bristol with his sister to superintend the printing and issue of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Coleridge visited them during that time—the latter part of August, 1798.

On the 27th of that month they reached London, having passed through Oxford and visited Blenheim. On the 16th of September they left Yarmouth for Hamburgh, but what they did in Germany cannot be recorded in this small volume.



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APPENDIX I

THE FENWICK NOTES TO POEMS WRITTEN AT ALFOXDEN

AFTER concluding the account of the final days spent by the two poets in Somerset, it may be of use to readers of this book for me to include in it some parts of those remarkable notes which Wordsworth dictated late in life to his secretarial friend, Miss Isabella Fenwick, so far as they are explanatory of the poems which he wrote while a resident at Alfoxden. There were eighteen of them, which I number chronologically.

1. *The Borderers* (composed 1795-6). Of this tragedy Wordsworth dictated the following: "It was composed at Race-down, in Dorset, during the latter part of the year 1795, and in the following

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year. Had it been the work of a later period of life, the plot would have been something more complex ; and a greater variety of characters introduced to relieve the mind from the pressure of incidents so mournful. My care was almost exclusively given to the passions and the characters, and the position in which the persons in the drama stood relatively to each other, that the reader (for I had then no thought of the stage) might be moved, and to a degree instructed, by lights penetrating somewhat into the depths of our nature. In this endeavour I cannot think, upon a very late review, that I have failed. As to the scene and period of action, little more was required for my purpose than the absence of established law and government, so that the agents might be at liberty to act on their own impulses."

2. *A Night Piece* (1798). "Composed on the road between Nether Stowey and Alfoxden, extempore."

The Fenwick Notes

3. *We are Seven* (1798).¹ “Written at Alfoxden in the spring of 1798. The little girl who is the heroine I met within the area of Goodrich Castle in the year 1793. . . . I composed it while walking in the grove at Alfoxden. . . . I composed the last stanza first, having begun with the last line. When it was all but finished, I came in and recited it to Mr. Coleridge and my sister, and said, ‘A prefatory stanza must be added, and I should sit down to our little tea-meal with greater pleasure if my task was finished.’ . . . Coleridge immediately threw off the stanza, thus—

A little child, dear brother Jem.

I objected to the rhyme ‘dear brother Jem’ as being ludicrous ; but we all enjoyed the joke of hitching in our friend James Tobin’s name, who was familiarly called Jem. He was the brother of the dramatist ; and this reminds me of an anecdote which it

¹ Much of this note (already quoted) dealt with *The Ancient Mariner*.

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may be worth while here to notice. The said Jem got sight of the *Lyrical Ballads* as it was going through the press at Bristol. . . . One evening he came to me with a grave face and said, 'Wordsworth, I have seen the volume that you and Coleridge are about to publish. There is one poem in it which I earnestly entreat you will cancel; for, if published, it will make you everlastingly ridiculous. . . . It is called, *We are Seven*.' 'Nay,' said I, 'that shall take its chance however,' and he left me in despair."

4. *Anecdote for Fathers* (1798). "This was suggested in front of Alfoxden. The boy was a son of my friend Basil Montagu, who had been two or three years under our care. The name Kilve is from a village on the Bristol Channel, about a mile from Alfoxden, and the name of Liswyn Farm was taken from a beautiful spot on the Wye, where Mr. Coleridge, my sister, and I had been visiting the famous John Thelwall. . . . The visit of this man to Coleridge was

The Fenwick Notes

the occasion of a spy being sent by Government to watch our proceedings, which were such as the world at large would have thought ludicrously harmless."

5. *A Whirl-blast from behind the Hill* (1798). "Observed in the holly-grove at Alfoxden, where these verses were written in the spring of 1798."

6. *The Thorn* (1798) "arose out of my observing, on the ridge of Quantock Hill, on a stormy day, a thorn, which I had often passed in calm and bright weather without noticing it. I said to myself: 'Cannot I by some invention do as much to make this thorn permanently and as impressive object as the storm has made it to my eyes at this moment?' I began the poem accordingly, and composed it with great rapidity. Sir George Beaumont painted a picture from it, which Wilkie thought his best. The sky in this picture is nobly done, but it reminds one too much of Wilson."

Coleridge and Wordsworth

7. *Goody Blake and Harry Gill* (1798).
“Written at Alfoxden. The incident is from Dr. Darwin’s *Zoönomia*. It is founded on a well-authenticated fact which happened in Warwickshire.”

8. *Her Eyes are Wild* (1798). “Written at Alfoxden. The subject was reported to me by a lady of Bristol, who had seen the poor creature.”

9. *Simon Lee, the Old Huntsman* (1798).
“This old man had been huntsman to the squires of Alfoxden, which, at the time we occupied it, belonged to a minor. The old man’s cottage stood upon the common, a little way from the entrance to Alfoxden Park. But it had disappeared. Improvements but rarely appear such to those who, after long intervals of time, revisit places they have had much pleasure in. The expression when the hounds were out, ‘I dearly love their voice,’ was word for word from his own lips.”

10. *Lines written in Early Spring* (1798).

The Fenwick Notes

“Actually composed while I was sitting by the side of the brook that runs down from the *coomb*, in which stands the village of Alfoxden. It was a chosen resort of mine. The brook ran down a sloping rock, so as to make a waterfall, considerable for that county : and across the pool below had fallen a tree—an ash, if I rightly remember—from which rose perpendicularly boughs in search of the light intercepted by the deep shade above. The boughs bore leaves of green, that for want of sunshine had faded into almost lily-white ; and from the underside of this natural sylvan bridge depended long and beautiful tresses of ivy, which waved gently in the breeze, that might, poetically speaking, be called the breath of the waterfall. This motion varied, of course, in proportion to the power of water in the brook. When, with dear friends, I revisited this spot, after an interval of more than forty years,¹ this interesting

¹ It was on May 13, 1841.

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feature of the scene was gone. To the owner of the place I could not but regret that the beauty of this retired part of the grounds had not tempted him to make it more accessible by a path, not broad or obtrusive, but sufficient for persons who love such scenes to creep along without difficulty."

11. *To my Sister* (1798). "Composed in front of Alfoxden House. My little boy-messenger on this occasion was the son of Basil Montagu. The larch mentioned in the first stanza was standing when I revisited the place, more than forty years after. I was disappointed that it had not improved in appearance as to size, nor had it acquired anything of the majesty of age which, even though less perhaps than any other tree, the larch sometimes does. A few score yards from this tree there grew, when we inhabited Alfoxden, one of the most remarkable beech trees ever seen. The ground sloped both toward and from it. It was of immense

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size, and threw out arms that struck into the soil, like those of the banyan tree, and rose again from it. Two of the branches thus inserted themselves twice, which gave to each the appearance of a serpent moving along by gathering itself up in folds. One of the large boughs of this tree had been torn off by the wind before we left Alfoxden, but five remained. In 1841 we could barely find the spot where the tree had stood. So remarkable a production of Nature could not have been wilfully destroyed."

12. *Expostulation and Reply* (1798). "This poem is a favourite among the Quakers, as I have learned on many occasions. It was composed in front of the house of Alfoxden, in the spring of 1798."

13. *The Tables Turned; an Evening Scene, on the same subject* (1798).

14. *The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman* (1798). "At Alfoxden, where I read Hearne's *Journal* with deep interest.

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It was composed for the volume of *Lyrical Ballads*."

15. *The Last of the Flock* (1798). "Produced at the same time as 'The Complaint,' and for the same purpose. The incident occurred in the village of Holford, close by Alfoxden."

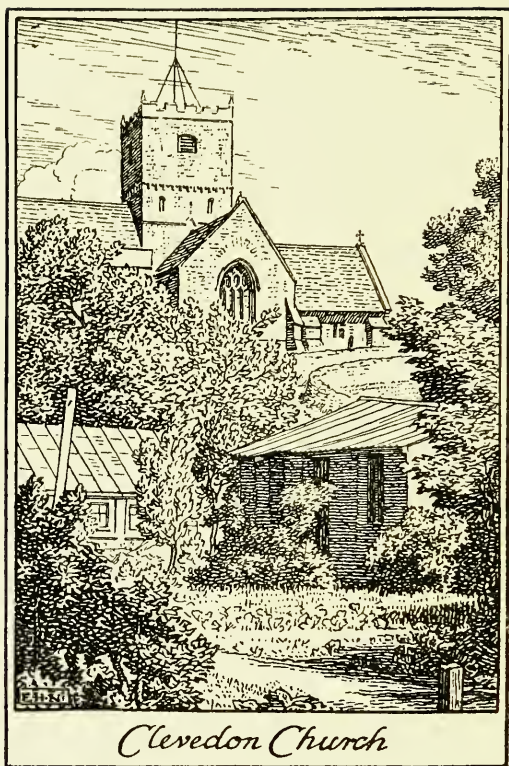
16. *The Idiot Boy* (1798). "The last stanza, 'The cocks did crow, to-whoo, to-whoo, and the sun did shine so cold,' was the foundation of the whole. The words were repeated to me by my dear friend Thomas Poole ; but I have since heard the same repeated of other idiots. Let me add that this long poem was composed in the quarry of Alfoxden, almost extempore ; not a word, I believe, being corrected, although one stanza was omitted. I mention this in gratitude to those happy moments ; for, in truth, I never wrote anything with so much glee. . . ."

17. *The Old Cumberland Beggar* (1798). "Observed, and with great benefit to my

The Fenwick Notes

own heart, when I was a child. Written at Racedown and Alfoxden in my twenty-third year."

18. *Animal Tranquillity and Decay* (1798).
"If I recollect right, these verses were an overflowing from *The Old Cumberland Beggar*."



Clevedon Church

APPENDIX II

POEMS WRITTEN IN SOMERSET
BY COLERIDGE

1. Sonnet to the River Otter (1793).
2. Lines to a Beautiful Spring in a Village (1793).
3. Melancholy—a fragment (1794 ?).
4. To a Young Ass, its mother tethered near it
(1798).
5. To a Friend (Charles Lamb), together with
an unfinished poem, “Religious Musings”
(Dec., 1794).
6. Priestley (Dec. 11, 1794).
7. La Fayette (Dec. 15, 1794).
8. Kosciusko (Dec. 16, 1794).
9. To the Rev. W. L. Bowles (first version,
Dec. 26, 1794).
10. To the Rev. W. L. Bowles (second version,
1796).
11. Mrs. Siddons (Dec. 29, 1794).
12. To Robert Southey (Jan. 14, 1795).

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13. To Richard Brinsley Sheridan (Jan. 29, 1795).
14. To Lord Stanhope (Jan. 31, 1795).
15. To the Rev. W. J. Hort (1795 ?).
16. Charity (1795 ?).
17. To the Nightingale (1795 ?).
18. Lines composed while climbing the last ascent of Brockley Coomb, Somersetshire (May, 1795).
19. Lines written at Shurton Bars, near Bridgewater, September, 1795, in answer to a letter from Bristol.
20. The Æolian Harp, composed at Clevedon, Somersetshire.
21. To the Author of Poems, Joseph Cottle, published anonymously at Bristol in September, 1795.
22. The Silver Thimble (1795).
23. Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement (1795).
24. Religious Musings. A desultory poem, written on the Christmas Eve of 1794.
25. On Observing a Blossom on the First of February, 1796.
26. Count Rumford (1796).

Appendix II

27. Fragment, from an unpublished poem
(1796).
28. To a Primrose, the first seen in the season
(1796).
29. Verses addressed to J. Horne Tooke (June
28, 1796).
30. Sonnet, on receiving a letter informing me
of the birth of a son (Sept. 20, 1796).
31. Sonnet, composed on a journey homeward :
the author having received intelligence of
the birth of a son (Sept. 20, 1796).
32. Sonnet, to a Friend who asked how I felt
when the nurse first presented my infant to
me (1796).
33. To a Young Friend (Charley Lloyd) on his
proposing to domesticate with the author.
Composed in 1796.
34. Sonnet, to Charles Lloyd (1796).
35. To a Friend (Charles Lamb), who had de-
clared his intention of writing no more
poetry (1796).
36. On a late Connubial Rupture in High Life
(1796).
37. The Destiny of Nations. A vision (1796).
38. Ode on the Departing Year (1796).

Coleridge and Wordsworth

39. To the Rev. George Coleridge, of Ottery
St. Mary, Devon. Nether Stowey, Somerset
(May 26, 1797).
40. On the Christening of a Friend's child (1797).
41. Translation of a Latin inscription by the Rev.
W. L. Bowles in Nether Stowey Parish
Church (1797).
42. The Foster Mother's Tale. A dramatic frag-
ment (1797).
43. The Dungeon (1797).
44. The Three Graves. A fragment of a
Sexton's tale (1797-1809).
45. This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison. Ad-
dressed to Charles Lamb (1797).
46. Kubla Khan (1798).
47. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (1797-
1798).
48. Sonnets attempted in the manner of con-
temporary writers.
49. To Simplicity.
50. On a Ruined House in a romantic country
(1797).
51. Famine, Fire, and Slaughter (1797).
52. Christabel (1801). The conclusion to part
the second (1801 ?).

Appendix II

53. France : An Ode (February, 1798).
54. Frost at Midnight (February, 1798).
55. Fears in Solitude. Written in April, 1798, during the alarm of an invasion. Nether Stowey, April 20, 1798.
56. To a Young Lady, Miss Lavinia Poole, on her recovery from a fever (March 31, 1798).
57. The Nightingale. A conversation poem, written in April, 1798.
58. Recantation, illustrated in the Story of the Mad Ox (July 30, 1798).
59. Love (1798-1799).
60. The Ballad of the Dark Ladie, a fragment (1798).



In the *Lines* composed while climbing the left ascent of Brockley Coomb, Somersetshire, in May, 1795, the following occurs :—

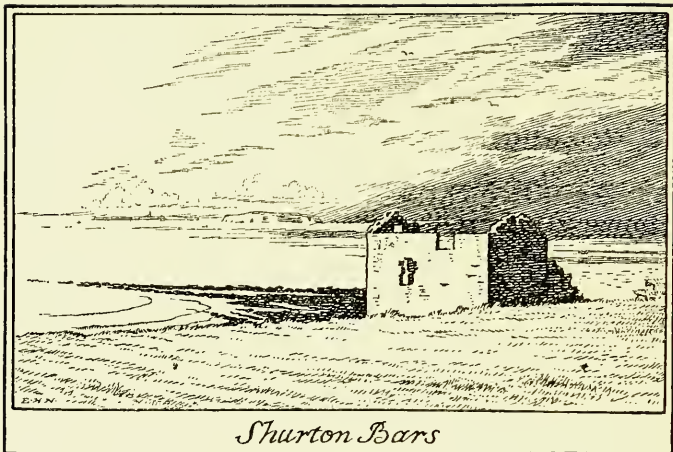
“ Ah ! what a luxury of landscape meets
My gaze ! Proud towers, and cots more dear to me,
Elm-shadowed fields, and prospect-bounding sea ! ”

This refers to the view of the coast from Weston-super-Mare to Clevedon, along the northern slopes of the Mendip Hills.

APPENDIX III

POEMS WRITTEN BY WORDSWORTH CHIEFLY IN SOMERSET

1. The Borderers (1795 and 1796).
2. A Night Piece (1798).
3. We are Seven (1798).
4. Anecdote for Fathers (1798).
5. A Whirl-blast from behind the Hill (1798).
6. The Thorn (1798).
7. Goody Blake and Harry Gill (1798).
8. Her Eyes are Wild (1798).
9. Simon Lee, the Old Huntsman (1798).
10. Lines written in Early Spring (1798).
11. To my Sister (1798).
12. Expostulation and Reply (1798).
13. The Tables turned (1798).
14. The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman
(1798).
15. The Last of the Flock (1798).
16. The Idiot Boy (1798).
17. The Old Cumberland Beggar (1798).
18. Animal Tranquillity and Decay (1798).
19. Peter Bell (1798).



In the *Lines written at Shurton Bars* (which is near Bridgwater), in September, 1795, in answer to a letter from Bristol, the following occurs :—

“ And hark, my love ! The sea-breeze moans
Through yon reft house ! ”

Shurton Bars is an ancient and deserted seaport, in Bridgwater Bay. The drawing shows the islands of Steepholm and Flatholm, alluded to in the poem.

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